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The first part of the book is devoted to a general
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 face of the globe. He has also
 described the progress of science and
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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES

CONCERNING THE

CHRISTIAN TEMPER:

BEING

Thirty Eight SERMONS

Upon the principal HEADS of

PRACTICAL RELIGION,

ESPECIALLY

As enjoined and enforced by CHRISTIANITY.

In TWO VOLUMES.

Designed for the Use of Families.

By JOHN EVANS, D. D.

V O L. I.

The FIFTH EDITION.

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MDCCLII.



TO THE
CONGREGATION

Which usually attends upon my Ministry.

 *THE following discourses, which have been the employment of several months in the pulpit, are now made publick, with an eye principally to the service of you and your families; whose best interests your Minister hath the strongest obligations to consult, not only from his special relation, but in gratitude for the long experience he has had of your candour and affection, which hath never been interrupted in the course of so many years.*

DEDICATION.

The subject of these sermons is of the greatest and most general importance, the spirit of Christianity; to which all the doctrines of our religion are designed to form us, and without which the external practice of our duty is in God's account no better than a dead carcase.

For Christianity is neither a mere speculative science, intended only for the information or entertainment of the mind; nor yet a flat system of precepts, without substantial and vital principles to support them: But it proposes many divine truths and doctrines to our faith, on purpose to influence and engage in the most forcible manner to a correspondent practice. And where it meets with a proper entertainment, it is neither so inward a thing, as to be altogether invisible: nor yet such a mere outside, as leaves the heart and the life at variance, or recommends a man to his fellow-creatures, while he is utterly un-

DEDICATION.

unacceptable to the heart-searching God: But the kingdom of God is first set up within us, and subjects the thoughts, the will, and affections to the obedience of Christ; and so produces out of the abundance of the heart the natural and visible fruits of christian practice.

A Gospel-ministry is intended to represent faith and practice in connection. And there are two ways of prosecuting that design. When any doctrine of the Gospel is the argument, to bring it down to practice, by shewing the reasonable influence which it ought to have upon one or another virtue: Or when the dispositions and duties of a Christian are more directly insisted upon, to recommend them from christian motives.

The discourses now offered to your perusal, are drawn up with the latter view: Wherein I have endeavoured to select those characters and ingredients of the christian temper, which
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DEDICATION.

I apprehend to be of principal weight, and of the most frequent and extensive use in the course of our obedience. In the review, they are cast into that method and order, which I thought most natural, and likely to be of the greatest service. The contents of both volumes will shew you the plan of the whole design at one view. I have taken the liberty of making such additions or other alterations in transcribing them for the press, as appeared to me most conducive to serve the ends of practical religion.

They are designedly accommodated to the use of families, especially on Lord's-day evenings. For that purpose I have endeavoured that they might not exceed in length; that in most of them a particular subject might be finished in a single discourse; or, where that rule could not be well observed, that the matter might be so divided, as to make each sermon as intire and independent as possible.

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DEDICATION.

If you shall think fit to make use of them in that way, I would hope that by the blessing of God the labour would not be in vain to your children and servants; and that at least it may be so far useful to yourselves, as to bring to remembrance the most necessary directions for christian conduct, tho' ye know them, and be established in them.

*I am persuaded upon a long knowledge of many of you, that I have your concurrence in hearty wishes, that the zeal of all good Christians might be chiefly spent about the unquestionable points of vital religion: that eager and unedifying contentions among them who hold the head, might give place to a holy ardour for promoting love and good works in themselves and others: and that the faith once delivered to the saints, might be employ'd as a weapon in the christian warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil, rather than be made
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DEDICATION.

*the occasion of doubtful disputations,
or of angry contests among brethren.*

I have nothing to add, but my fervent prayers to God, that your love may abound yet more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. And it is my earnest desire of you, my brethren, that you would continue daily to pray for us who labour among you in the word and doctrine, that we may obtain mercy to be faithful and successful.

Prescot-street,
Apr. 3, 1723.

I am

Your affectionate Servant,

John Evans.



S E R M O N I.

The importance of knowing
what Spirit we are of.

LUKE ix. 55.

*But he turned, and rebuked them, and said,
Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye
are of.*



THE design of Christianity is to rectify the inward temper of our souls, and so to produce a change in our conversations. All the doctrines of it are reveal'd with this practical view ; a well as the precepts, the promises, and the threatnings, which directly carry that aspect. Tho' we should have the clearest notions of truth, and should seem to be most fully persuaded of the divine original

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and authority of the Gospel ; yet if our faith be a mere speculation in the head, without making us *partakers of a divine nature*, it will neither be honourable to God, nor advantageous to ourselves. It is therefore a matter of the last consequence to us all, to discover whether we are formed to the christian temper, or whether the dispositions of our souls be of a contrary character. I have chosen this admonition of Christ to his disciples, as a foundation for shewing you the importance of this inquiry, *what spirit we are of.*

Our blessed Lord delivers this reproof upon a particular occasion. As he was going up to the passover at *Jerusalem*, he sent some of his disciples before him, who *went and entred into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him*, ver. 52. to provide some refreshments for him and his followers. But these Samaritans *did not receive him, because his face was as tho' he would go up to Jerusalem*, ver. 53. There was an inveterate hatred between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, ever since the *Samaritans* had set up a temple of their own at Mount *Gerizim*, and had forsaken the temple and true worship of God at *Jerusalem* ; insomuch that they would scarce have any dealings one with another, *John* iv. 9. For this reason they would have nothing to do with Christ ; they would not shew him or his followers even common civility, when they

Serm. i. *what Spirit we are of.* 3

they found that they were going up to the temple at *Jerusalem*. Two of Christ's disciples, *James* and *John*, highly resenting this usage, say, *Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did?* ver. 54. Here was an appearance of warm affection to their master, of a mighty zeal for the true religion, and a seeming regard to a great and good precedent, that of *Elijah*. He had, by the special appointment of God, forbid some of king *Abaziab's* servants to make application to *Baalzebub*, an idol of the *Philistines*, on behalf of their master, when he sent them for that purpose. *Abaziab* thereupon ordered out a number of soldiers to apprehend the prophet; but when they came, *Elijah* said to the captain of the company. *If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty;* 2 Kings i. 10. and it did so.

The disciples here ask Christ, whether they should not call for the like vengeance from heaven against the *Samaritans*. We have his answer in the text: *He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* This reproof might be designed, either for their not considering the difference between their case and that of *Elijah*, whose pattern they pretended to copy after; or for not attending to the different spirit and genius of the dis-

penetration of the Messiah from that of the Old Testament; or, lastly, for their ignorance of the true frame of their own spirits.

1. Their case was different from that of *Elijah*, tho' they pretended to write after his copy: and this they should have considered. His case was special, and not to be drawn into a common precedent. Before *Elijah* called for fire from heaven on those who came to seize him, he had, in a public contest between him and the prophets of *Baal*, called for fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice, which was offered to the true God, and his God, with whom *Baal* was set up for a competitor; and fire was sent down accordingly. But after God had wrought that miracle, in vindication of his own honour against *Baal*, and of the character of *Elijah* as a true prophet, these people assaulted him for a message he delivered in the name of God, and would carry him by force to *Samaria*, where *Jezabel* was ready to put him to death. The prophet therefore, no doubt under the influence of the same prophetic spirit as before, called for fire from heaven upon the messengers who made this presumptuous attempt. The whole transaction was extraordinary, for extraordinary ends, and under an extraordinary divine influence. The disciples would now pretend to imitate this as a pattern, which was never designed for such: nor had they any
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warrant to expect that God would answer their call in this matter; and therefore it was presumption in them to attempt the extraordinary things which *Elijah* did.

Things done by an extraordinary spirit, are not to be drawn into precedents in ordinary cases. How many ridiculous and even pernicious things have enthusiasts been led into on many occasions, on pretence of imitating the actions of extraordinary men; which would have been effectually prevented, if they had attended to this one rule, That we should not attempt to follow the actions of the greatest or best of men recorded in Scripture, farther than it appears, either from plain directions of Scripture, or from the nature of the case, that they can and should be imitated.

2. The spirit and genius of the dispensation of the Messiah was very different from that of the Old Testament; and the disciples were to be blamed, that they considered not the better spirit which now became them. As the legal dispensation is called *the spirit of bondage*, and that of the Gospel, *the spirit of adoption*, Rom. viii. 15. because in the one God dealt with his church more like servants, and in the other more like sons: so here, when the disciples would have the *Samaritans* consumed by fire from heaven, as those were upon the application of the antient prophet; they should have considered,

that this was not suitable to the milder dispensation of the Gospel. A spirit of rigour and severity was more apparent in the whole Mosaical œconomy, in the precepts, in the threatnings of temporal evils, during that period of the church; and so in the methods used to punish an indignity offered to a prophet of the Lord: but Christ came to introduce a more spiritual and a milder dispensation, wherein the main severities are reserved to be executed in another world, upon those who shall be found finally incorrigible. He came into the world, breathing grace and truth: his doctrine proclaimed God's good-will towards men; his miracles were miracles of beneficence; and in his example he was meek and lowly. Instead of teaching his disciples such a temper towards enemies, he had already taught them the most exalted charity; to *love their enemies, to bless them that cursed them, to do good to them that hated them, and to pray for them which should despitefully use them, and persecute them; Matt. v. 44.* It became his followers rather to be of this evangelical spirit, a forbearing, forgiving, gentle spirit, than to imitate the rigour of *Elias*. This sense is countenanced by the words which immediately follow: *For the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them, ver. 56.* So that we learn from hence,

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That a fiery wrathful spirit, even against men most erroneous in matters of religion, is very opposite to the spirit and genius of the Gospel. Christ, after this, prayed for those who not only refused him, but crucified him; and, after his resurrection, ordered his apostles to begin at Jerusalem, in making the tenders of his Gospel, *Luke xxiv. 47.* Nor would he have his religion propagated, or his most obstinate enemies suppressed, by any methods of external violence: *The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, patient: in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance unto the acknowledgment of the truth; 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.* This is the spirit prescribed by the Gospel to those who would serve the interest of Christ and his truth: those who use other methods, know not what spirit they are of.

3. They seem to have been ignorant of the true frame and temper of their own spirits, when they made this motion. They would say, like *Jebu, Come see our zeal for the Lord;* our love to our master, our concern for his honour, our indignation at those who treat him so unworthily: but Christ, who saw what was in man, probably discerned that there was too much of private revenge and resentment firing them upon this occasion, or at least a defect of charity; and this he might justly blame in them, that they

did not more carefully attend to the motions of their own spirits, and so were not sensible what spirit they were of.

This last is the view of the words in which I propose to consider them, as introductory to several other practical discourses: and accordingly I observe from them,

That it is a very faulty thing in any, and especially in those who profess to be the disciples of Christ, not to know what spirit they are of.

Upon which observation, I would *first* consider the matter to be known; and then, *secondly*, the necessity and importance of this part of knowledge.

I. The matter to be known is a little more particularly to be inquired into. *What spirit we are of.* I will not absolutely confine myself to that particular inquiry about our spirits, the want of which Christ, as has been observed, had occasion to blame in his disciples; but shall take in that, and some other things too, which the words are apt enough to express, and which it will be no small disadvantage to us in our best interests to be unacquainted with. We are much concerned to know these *three* things;

What spirit we are eminently of by natural temper.

What principles and ends govern us in particular motions of our spirits and actions of life. And,

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What is the prevailing and predominant dispositions of our souls; whether the christian temper, or that which is opposite to it.

1. What spirit we are eminently of *by natural temper*. Nothing is more obvious than the vast difference of tempers among mankind: and that not only arising from difference of education, and of eternal impressions; which, without doubt, make no small change in the dispositions of men: nor yet owing merely to long habits and customs of vice on the one hand, or to the peculiar grace of God, and to eminent holy diligence on the other; which certainly make the greatest distinctions between man and man: but also a difference founded in natural constitution. We may see this in childhood, before the mind is molded by instruction, or example, or a course of practice; and on the contrary, it is hardly ever extinguished in riper years. Besides the general corruption of nature, apparent in some instance or other in all; some from the very first dawnings of reason discover more than others, either a sour and rugged disposition, or a hastiness of temper, or some such disagreeable biases, which grows up with them to men. And tho' this may be considerably abated by a good education, and especially is much rectified by the grace of God in good men; yet, where it is the constitutional bent, it usually finds people more work for care and watchfulness all their days,
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than it does to others. If we turn our view the other way, there is early visible in some an easiness and gentleness of disposition, an inclination to humanity and tenderness, or the like engaging turn of mind.

Now in this sense it would be the wisdom of every man to know what spirit he is of, to study his own temper, which way that most naturally and readily carries him. For according to the tendencies of our constitution, if we carefully observe them, we may discover what temptations in the ordinary course of life need most to be provided against, and in what way we are most likely to be useful. Those sins most easily beset men, and are hardest to be overcome, which have constitution strongly on their side: a man may justly esteem them to be eminently *his own iniquity*. And as every sort of natural temper has its particular disadvantages and dangers; so no sort is without some advantages, which, if carefully attended to, and improved, may contribute to our serviceableness in life. Those of a sanguine make, are more exposed to the temptations of levity and sensuality, and therefore have most occasion to be there on their guard; but then they are better prepared for a chearful activity in doing good, if they be right set. The heavy and phlegmatic, as they are more prone to indulge sloth and idleness, so, if they get over this temptation, they can with greater ease bear

bear close and long application, than those of more quick and active spirits. The dark and the melancholy temper lays men open to unreasonable fears and despondencies, to malice and censoriousness, if the devil and a corrupt heart have the government of it; but under the direction of grace, it gives men a peculiar advantage for seriousness. The sweet and gentle disposition, as it exposes to more hazard from the impressions of ill company and seducing sinners, so it gives a truly good man no small advantage above his neighbours, for recommending religion to those with whom he converses: such a man is well heard by every body. The knowledge then of our own spirits in this respect, as to the predominant natural temper to which the body disposes, is well worth our cultivating.

2. What particular principles and ends govern us, in the particular motions of our spirits and actions of life; whether we act from a good or a bad principle, and whether the ends we propose to ourselves be right. The moral nature of actions in the sight of God principally depends upon this. An unlawful action indeed will not be justified by a man's having a good end in it, as long as he hath sufficient opportunity to know that it is forbidden; for we must not *do evil that good may come*, Rom. iii. 8. Yet an action, ever so good for the matter of it, loses all its value in God's account, who *searches the heart,*
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and tries the reins, if it proceeds from a bad principle, or is intended to serve a sinful or unworthy purpose. The same outward act may proceed from very different and contrary springs; of which the case in the text is an instance. A seeming expression of love to Christ, of zeal for the true religion, may be animated by no better principle than unchristian resentment, and animosity and revenge; or at least there may be such a mixture of this bad principle with a better, as spoils the performance. Christ intimates, that men may *fast and pray*, and *give alms*, and all upon so low a view, as merely *to be seen of men*; but then plainly tells us, that they will lose their reward from God, *Mat. vi. 2, 5, 16.* And the Apostle intimates it to be possible for a man to *bestow all his goods to feed the poor*, (the greatest instance in outward appearance of love to men) and to *give his body to be burned*, i. e. as a martyr, the highest proof, one would think, of love to God; and yet to *have no charity*; to be animated to such glaring actions by no true principle either of love to God or man, *1 Cor. xiii. 3.* Solomon tells us, *Prov. xxi. 23.* *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination*; i. e. God will not accept the sacrifices, the appearances of religious regard to him, that are offered up by a man who resolvedly goes on in a sinful course; he adds, *How much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?* How much more abominable

minable must his sacrifice be, when that itself is profaned and poisoned by a vicious intention? when the all-seeing God, suppose, knows that a man offers it, either only to quiet conscience in other evil practices, or to enable him the more easily to impose upon his neighbour, by wearing the mask of religion? It is therefore a matter of the utmost consequence, that we *take heed to our spirit*, in every action we perform, *Mal. ii. 16.* that we *keep our heart with all diligence*, *Prov. iv. 23.* that we be well assured, that the several deliberate steps we take, be agreeable to the dictates of a good spirit; and that that which is indisputably good in itself, be done upon right principles, and for right ends: and so we may know what spirit we are of.

3. What is the prevailing and predominant disposition of our souls; whether the christian temper, or that which is opposite to it. The last inquiry is necessary to our passing a due judgment upon *particular actions*; and this to determine our *state*. The best natural temper is still but depraved nature; and the worst, if rectified by grace, is in the way of cure, and that cure will be more and more advanced, till it arrive at the perfections of *the spirits of just men* above. Every man then is most highly concerned to know what that spirit is which makes his character; whether a holy and a heavenly temper has the ascendant in him, or a sinful
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and an earthly mind: or, in other words, whether he is *led by the holy Spirit* of God, as true Christians are, *Rom. viii. 9, 14.* or by *the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*, *Eph. ii. 2.* These amount to the same thing; for wherever there is a holy bent and turn of soul, the Scripture teaches us to ascribe it to the gracious agency of the Spirit of God: and on the other hand, all who are under the guidance of the holy Spirit, have their own spirits prevailingly recovered to the christian temper. We are therefore concerned carefully to search the word of God, for the description given there of the christian temper, and of that which is opposite to it; and then diligently to *prove our own selves*, as the Apostle directs, *2 Cor. xiii. 5.* that we may discern which of these spirits we are of. The Scripture sometimes represents these different dispositions by way of summary: We have a very comprehensive one in *Gal. v. 19—23.* *The works of the flesh are manifest; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and what follows, ver. 24. crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts.* So *St. Peter* gives us a specimen

men what it is to be *partakers of a divine nature*; namely to partake of *faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, charity*; in which therefore he presses Christians to improve, *2 Pet. i. 4—7*. But as these summaries are not designed to reckon up all the branches; so we must consider the several graces mentioned in various parts of Scripture, as going to make up the christian spirit. I intend to assist you in this view, by a distinct consideration of the descriptions of a good spirit given in Scripture, either in its general nature, or particular branches. It will lie upon you to prove your own selves, as we go along, that you may behold your true face in the glass of the Gospel. At present I go on to shew,

II. The usefulness and necessity of knowing what spirit we are of.

1. *As we are reasonable creatures*, the knowledge of ourselves is the most near and immediate concern we have. *Nosce teipsum, Know thyself*, was the celebrated oracle of old among the heathens: and, *Know ye not your own selves?* is a very strong exhortation of the Apostle with Christians. *2 Cor. xiii. 5*. No other part of knowledge for certain can be of such moment to us, as that which relates to ourselves: the most careful inquiries about other things, if this be neglected, are no better than a busy idleness; or
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an application to that, which, though it may find our minds full employment, yet is nothing to our purpose. A man who can readily tell you the situation of places, and the state of things in distant lands, while he is a stranger to the nature, the history, and the interests of his native country, would justly be thought to have ill employed his pains: or he who busies himself in the affairs of other men, and at the same time neglects his own. He is guilty of equal folly, who takes pains to come at the knowledge of things foreign to him, but contentedly remains ignorant of himself. And no part of the knowledge of ourselves is so necessary, as the knowledge of our spirits, which are the principle part of ourselves. The power of reflection is laid in our natures for this very purpose, that we should look into ourselves; and it should immediately, in the use of it, turn upon ourselves: for without self-acquaintance, it is given us in vain.

2. *As we are professed Christians*, nothing deserves to have so much stress laid upon it.

It is represented as the very design of the Gospel, beyond the former legal dispensation, to lead men *to serve God in newness of the spirit*, or with a new spirit, *Rom. vii. 6*. Our great Master began his publick ministration, when he entered upon his prophetic office, with pronouncing *blessedness* principally to a new and holy temper of soul. So the strain of his beatitudes runs, in *Mat. v. to the poor*
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in spirit; to them that mourn; to the meek; to such as hunger and thirst after righteousness; to the pure in heart: plainly signifying at his setting out, the genius of his religion, to reach the spirits of men, and in that respect to make his disciples more excellent than their neighbours.

3. *As we aim at the favour of God, this is the thing principally to be regarded by us; because it is principally regarded by God. Men cannot reach the hearts of their fellow-creatures; but must judge only according to outward appearance. But God sees deeper; and therefore the fairest outside, without a right temper of soul, cannot possibly meet with divine acceptance. He desires truth in the inward parts, Psalm li. 6. The hidden man of the heart, when that is godlike, is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Pet. iii. 4. And if our heart be removed far from him, tho' we should draw near to him with our mouth, and with our lips honour him; this will be of little account with God, Isai. xxix.*

13. The apostle speaking directly to the *Jews*, who boasted of a peculiar relation to God, declares the same thing, in language suited to them, but equally fit for our admonition, *Rom. ii. 28, 29. He is not a Jew, (not intitled to the special favour of God, as the Jews thought themselves to be) who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, (such as shall avail to mens partaking of the*

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righteousness which is by faith) *that is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;* (who is in his inward temper what one of the peculiar people of God should be) *and circumcision (that which will turn to a saving account) is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

4. *As we are obliged to a holy life, it is necessary there should be a care of the inward temper, which is the principle of the other. Keep the heart; for out of it are the issues of life, or, of the life, Prov. iv. 23. As the heart is, so the life is like to be. To this purpose our Saviour speaks, Matt. xii. 33, 34. 35. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things.* As the most regular conversation and commendable actions, without a good heart to support and animate them, are in truth but vile hypocrisy, and a false disguise; so, while such an outward appearance of goodness is maintained, it must all be an unnatural and unpleasant force upon a man, and for that reason cannot be expected to last long.

5. *As ever we would secure inward peace and tranquillity of mind, we should carefully attend to the tempers of our souls. A mind under the government of passion and appetite, has many springs of uneasiness and disquiet within itself; according to the elegant description of the prophet, Isai. lvii. 20. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* If they have nothing to trouble them from without, their own distempered spirits will not suffer them to be at rest. And if we consider inward peace farther, as resulting from reflection, and the approbation of conscience; there can be no room for it, without an acquaintance with our own spirits. We cannot justly approve a particular action, unless we are conscious to ourselves that we were governed in it by good motives, as well as that it was good for the matter of it: nor can we entertain a safe hope of eternity; without being able to discern a congruity of temper to the happiness in reversion. *But let every man prove his own work, then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another, Gal. vi. 4.*

6. *As we are in an ensnaring world, we are concerned to know the bent of our souls. When we know the sins which most easily beset us, whether pride, or passion, or sensuality, or covetousness; we see where our principal and most constant guard is necessary,*

what irregular inclination we should most set ourselves to mortify, where Satan is most like to gain an advantage over us. The more ignorant we are of our weak part, the more likely he is to prevail; for we have given that watchful enemy too many opportunities to discern this, tho' for want of attention we should remain ignorant of it ourselves. And indeed the general knowledge of the imperfection of our own hearts, of their instability, their constant proneness to one evil or other, is of great consequence to us in the christian life; that we may not be confident in ourselves, but may maintain a constant dependance on divine grace to keep us from falling, which is absolutely necessary to our safety: And God will probably take some way to make us sensible that it is so, if we forget it; as he left Hezekiah to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

7. As ever we would attend on God's ordinances, and perform religious exercises with advantage, it is necessary we should know the spirit we are of. For want of this, those instructions which are most apposite to the case of men, lose their effect. Ill men escape conviction, and lose the benefit of the aptest means for their everlasting welfare, because they know not themselves. Christ is not entertained by them, because they see not their need of him: *For the whole have no need of*

of

of the physician, but they that are sick, Luke v. 31. As long as the *Laodiceans* continued to flatter themselves that they were *rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;* so long Christ's counsel would be little regarded by them, when he calls upon them *to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich; and white raiment, that they might be clothed, &c.* Rev. iii. 17, 18. And sometimes even good men deny themselves the comfort offered them, for want of a fuller acquaintance at home. This occasions a wrong application of the word of God, either to encourage presumption, or unreasonably to encrease despondencies. The same self-ignorance, carried into our prayers, or praises, or confessions, must prevent their being performed with understanding. How can we ask of God the blessings most proper for us, unless we are sensible of our present spiritual wants? How should we praise God in a right manner for spiritual benefits received, unless we know what he has done for our souls? or manage our confessions suitably to our own case, unless upon a search into our spirits, we discern what is amiss there?

Let us all then be persuaded to make this our concern and business, to know what spirit we are of. This must decide the great question, whether we are in a state of accep-

tance with God, and whether we are tending towards heaven or hell? Here begins the great discrimination between good and bad men thro' the world, whether the disposition of their souls be prevailingly good or bad, christian or unchristian. And yet, tho' it is a matter of the greatest importance, men are apt to be mistaken in the case; to *think themselves to be something, when they are nothing*; or at least to *think of themselves above what they ought to think*. But think a little, how prejudicial a mistake here must be; and that, whether your state be good or bad.

If you are still in a state of sin, and alienated from God, you deceive your selves with vain hopes, which must fail you. You judge differently of your selves from what God does; and what must that issue in at last, but dreadful disappointment, if you should come to see your mistake too late to rectify it? And by this self-flattery you are prevailed upon to neglect the proper season, the present one, for rectifying that which is amiss. It is impossible, that at any time you should come to your selves, and have your state made safe, without beginning here at the knowledge of your spirits.

On the other hand, if your state should now be good, you are enemies to your own comfort, in neglecting the strictest scrutiny of your selves; for that would give you

you a more satisfactory view of your sincerity, and scatter the doubts, which must remain till you discern distinctly the work of God in your hearts. And you must greatly obstruct an improvement and progress in the divine life, while, for want of a fuller acquaintance with your selves, you are insensible of many wants which still need to be supplied, and of many infirmities to be out-grown.

I will close this discourse with the mention of *three* directions.

1. Be not afraid to *know the plague of your own heart*; the worst of your case, and whatever is amiss in your spirits. Our Saviour observes, *John iii. 20.* that *every one that doth evil, hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* To be averse to bring our selves to the light, is at once a very bad symptom, and of dangerous tendency. It must either absolutely shut us up in a fatal self-ignorance, or prevent our being impartial in our searches.

2. Often take a view of your selves in the glass of the gospel. A good and a bad spirit are very fully and plainly distinguished there. Bring your own tempers to the test by that rule. Do this with the utmost seriousness, as under the eye of God: and frequently review the matter, lest you should have committed a mistake.

3. Accompany all your rational inquiries with earnest prayer to God, that he would search and try you, and enable you by the grace of his holy Spirit to discern the true state of your own case. The apostle says in another case, 1 Cor. ii. 11. *What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God.* So I may say, in this case; no other man is conscious of what passes within our own spirits, but ourselves; and therefore the review of that must be our own province: the spirit of God, on the other hand, who best knew the mind of God, has drawn the lineaments of that spirit and temper which is truly pleasing to God, in scripture. But in comparing these two, we need his gracious agency in concurrence with the actings of our own spirits. That will produce the fullest satisfaction, when he *witnesseth with our spirits*, [συμμαρτυρεῖ] *that we are the children of God*, Rom. viii. 16.

S E R M O N II.

 The Christian Spirit a new Spirit.

E P H E S. iv. 23.

And be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind.

THE Apostle had exhorted these *Ephesians*, in *ver. 17.* *not to walk as other Gentiles walked*, who had not embraced Christianity. He describes their sad case to the end of *ver. 19.* and expresses his better hope of those to whom he wrote, who had known and professed the christian doctrine, *ver. 20, 21.* *But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.* Your temper and character is become quite of another kind from that of other *Gentiles*, and from that which was once your own in the days of your ignorance, if you have been well acquainted with the design of Christianity, and have heartily embraced it with that view.

Now

Now what is the great design and scope of Christianity, which all, who hear of it, should learn; and which all, who have been taught by Christ, as the truth is in Jesus, do learn? An account of that follows in the three next verses: It is, *to put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*, ver. 22. It is to abandon the old corrupt practices, to which you were accustomed by the governing influence of depraved nature, while you pursued its irregular inclinations and lusts: and *to be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and thereupon to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*, ver. 23, 24.

That which I propose now to consider, and to begin with, as the first general view of the christian spirit, is, That it is a new temper of mind. And the text leads us to observe,

That those who have learned Christ to good purpose, are renewed in the spirit of their minds.

The right disposition of the soul is represented both in the old and new testament by this character. The *Psalmist* prays, that *a right spirit might be renewed within him*, Psal. li. 10. So God expresses his promises of grace by the prophet *Ezekiel*, ch. xi. 19. *I will put a new spirit within you.* And ch. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.* Divine
calls

calls to repentance are expressed in the same language, *Ezek. xviii. 31. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit.* In the same manner the gospel itself speaks, *2 Cor. v. 17. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.* We are said to be delivered from the law, that we might serve in newness of the spirit, *Rom. vii. 6.* So the apostle's exhortation runs, *Rom. xii. 2. Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind.* Do not imitate the sinful customs of the world, but see there be a change in the temper of your mind, as a foundation for better practice. So in this context we read of the *old*, and the *new man*. This is therefore a frequent and familiar representation which the Scripture gives of the good disposition of the soul, that it is *new*.

I need not tell you, that this does not signify a change of our faculties themselves, as if in a strict and literal sense our souls were to be made anew: But that which is intended, is the introducing of new and holy qualities, in opposition to the sinful disorders which once prevailed in them by the bias of corrupt nature and evil custom, to the *old leaven*, with which they were once deeply tinged. The main seat of these disorders is in the soul or mind; and therefore there the

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cure and change is to begin, and there the greatest alteration is made; though wherever this inward change is genuine, it will descend in its influence and effects to the outward conversation. Conversion is principally a new modelling of the soul, or a renovation of the spirit of the mind; the rest will follow upon that.

In representing this alteration, it may be proper, I. To caution you against resting in some changes which come not up to the renewing of the mind. And, II. To give a more particular view of this renovation.

I. There are some changes in men, which come not up to the renewed spirit, and yet are too often and too easily rested in.

1. The assuming of a new name and profession, is a very different thing from a saving change in the temper of the mind. I would charitably hope, that among the several denominations of Christians there are some truly renewed; but there is no doubt but we may be of any profession, and yet be unrenewed. We may *have a name to live, and yet be dead*, Rev. iii. 1. Christianity would have been a very mean thing, and not worth all the solemn credentials with which God introduced it into the world, if all the intention of it had been to separate a people from others by a new name, how great and excellent soever that name might be. To be called
Heathens,

Heathens, or *Jews*, or *Christians*, if that was all, would neither be worthy of God to exert himself for, nor of a reasonable creature to take any great pleasure in. And much less can it be of any value, merely to herd one's self under any of the distinguishing names known among Christians. What signifies it what name we bear, if we have not a correspondent nature? Christianity is a real, a distinguishing character of souls; and if men bear not that proper character in the inward man, it would be more becoming to bear any other name than that of a *Christian*. I should not have mentioned this, but that I doubt it is a common delusion. People value themselves upon their wearing the *Christian* name, instead of that of *Pagan*, or *Jew*, or *Mahometan*; or upon being stiled *Papists* or *Protestants*; or upon their attaching themselves to one or another noted party, into which these are subdivided: and upon such a new appellation, they are too ready to imagine that they are new men. Whereas we may go the round of all professions, and still have the old nature remaining in full force.

2. A bare restraint upon the corrupt spirit and temper will not come up to this renovation, though the one may sometimes be mistaken for the other. The light of nature may possess conscience against many evils; or a sober education lay such a bridle upon the corrupt inclination, as will keep it in for a season;

son; the fear of punishment, or of shame and reproach, may suppress the outward criminal act, while the heart is full of ravening and wickedness. Or God in his providence may divert a temptation, or withhold the opportunity, which would try the inclination to an ill thing; and in such a situation a man may imagine himself to abhor a sin, to which upon a proper temptation he plainly shews that he has no aversion: As *Hazael* said to the prophet, when he foretold the savage cruelty he would exercise upon *Israel*, 2Kings viii. 13. *What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?* We read of some who had escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*; who had so far entertained and been influenced by Christianity, that they were visibly reformed: but this was not a saving change, for they were again intangled therein, and overcome; 2 Pet. ii. 20. And indeed that is commonly the issue of bare restraints, without a new principle; the restraint is taken off, or the inclination grows too strong for it, and then men return like the dog to his vomit. Therefore, though it is a plain sign of an unrenewed mind, if a man live in any course of gross sin; yet it is not safe to conclude merely from restraints, that a man is truly renewed.

3. A partial change in the temper itself, will not amount to such a renovation as makes

makes a true Christian. Indeed in one sense the change is but partial in any in this life ; there will be remains of disorder in all the powers of the soul, so as to exclude a pretence to absolute perfection : but in another sense, the true Christian is universally renewed ; every power and faculty shares in the alteration ; and there is a prevailing inclination to all the branches of goodness and duty, without a stated exception against any, or in favour of any sin, as far as known. The apostle is express in this, 2 Cor. v. 17. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ;—all things are become new.*

It is not enough to have the mind filled with sound knowledge and useful notions, nor barely to give a dead assent to the doctrines of the Gospel, unless we *believe with the heart*, and the will and affections be brought under the power of those truths ; and even here there may be some alteration, and yet a man not be renewed. *Balaam* had strong desires to *die the death of the righteous*, but was still *alienated from the life of God*. *Saul* made some purposes of amendment, but they were faint and fading. *Cain* was terrified in his conscience for sin, and yet not a true penitent : and *Judas* also ; notwithstanding which he is gone to his own place. A very bad people *sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways ; they asked of him the ordinances of justice, they took delight in approaching to God,*

Isa,

Isa. lviii. 2. And those, represented by the emblem of the *stony ground*, bear the word of God, and with joy receive it, but fall short of the character of true christians, *Matt.* xiii. 20, 21. Such instances as these plainly shew, that the affections may receive a new turn, and yet leave a man far short of a saving change.

Nor is it sufficient that we should find our selves disposed to some parts of goodness, while our hearts are utterly averse to others which are equally plain. *The grace of God teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world*, *Tit.* ii 12. And where the Gospel has effect to renew the spirit of the mind, there is a disposition to all these; to the government of our appetites and passions, to all social virtues, and to the duties which we owe more immediately to God. And therefore, tho' we should be of a courteous, peaceable and kind temper towards men; tho' we should be inclined to practise justice, liberality, truth and honesty in our transactions with them, and to temperance and chastity in our personal conduct; tho' these are excellent branches of the christian spirit: yet if there be not a right temper towards God also, if the fear and love of God are not the ruling principles of the soul, there is an essential defect in the christian spirit. And the contrary will equally hold true; whatever regard we seem disposed to pay to God, it cannot proceed

ceed from a right principle, unless our souls are formed also to the love and exercise of all moral and social virtues, which are evidently required from us by the same authority: *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, Jam. ii. 10. As if he had said, “ Put the case, that a
 “ man should resolve upon obedience to all
 “ the commands of God, except one, which
 “ he desires to be excused from observing,
 “ though he knows it to be a command of
 “ God as well as the rest; such a man is
 “ guilty of all: *i. e.* he will in such a case be
 “ as truly chargeable with disowning and
 “ insulting the authority of the lawgiver, as
 “ if he refused obedience to the rest; and his
 “ seeming willingness to comply with the
 “ rest, cannot be a religious submission to the
 “ authority of God, but for some meaner
 “ reason.” *For*, as the apostle goes on,
 ver. 11. *He that said; do not commit adultery,*
said also, do not kill. And therefore if a
 man hates the one out of a simple and sin-
 cere regard to God, he will for the same rea-
 son abhor the other also.

II. I proceed to give a more particular view of this *renovation* in some principal acts of the mind.

1. The mind comes to have different apprehensions of things, such as it had not before. The *new* creation, as hath been often
 D observed,

observed, begins with light, as the *old* is represented to do. When *Paul* was sent to preach the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, the divine mission he received is described to be on this design, *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and so from the power of Satan unto God*, Acts xxvi. 18. And the actual efficacy of his preaching upon some of those *Gentiles*, he thus expresses, *Eph. v. 8. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.* At conversion the mind comes out of darkness. I say not that a man hath always at such a time some discovery made to his mind of a new truth, with which he was altogether unacquainted before: Sometimes that may be the case, when persons bred up in gross ignorance are providentially brought to their first knowledge of the truth, and receive serious impressions from it at the same time. But it is not always so; light may begin to be saving to a man, tho' there is not one new truth added to the stock of his former notions: and yet he may justly be said to have *new* apprehensions, because he sees the same things in another, a stronger and more convincing light: his mind is fixed in more attention to them, they appear in fuller evidence; and so the difference between former and present impressions from them, is like that made by hearsay, and that which is founded upon sight. When apprehensions of divine things become thus lively and powerful,

ful, these counter-apprehensions, by which the soul was kept before in bondage to sin, are dispelled; or, at least, the influence of light prevails. Formerly a man fancied pleasure or advantage in sin; and this persuasion was stronger and more in his eye, than any apprehensions of its evil and danger: but now he is fully convinced that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God. The world and its enjoyments once glared in his imagination; now he is firmly persuaded that they are so vain as to be unfit for his portion. He thought well of himself; but now he sees that he is *poor, and miserable; and wretched, and blind, and naked*: Light bearing in, and the mind being fixed in attention, he discerns the great corruption of his heart, and the badness of the principles and ends which governed him in the appearances of goodness, upon which he valued himself before. And so the excellency and suitableness of Christ, in all his offices, and the necessity of real inward holiness, appear in quite another manner to his soul than hitherto. And hereupon,

2. The practical judgment is altered. This light, shining with clearness and strength into the mind, unsettles and changes the whole practical judgment, by which a man suffered himself to be governed before, in the matters of his soul: He judges those truths of religion to be real, which once had no more force with him than doubtful conclusions;

and accordingly he cannot satisfy himself any longer barely not to disbelieve them, but gives a firm and lively assent to them. It may be heretofore he could not withhold a fluctuating, occasional assent to the evil of sin, and the vanity of the world, when he was forced to employ a thought about them; but in truth, his ordinary practical judgment was much stronger the other way: now he knows and feels the bitterness of sin, and that all the world cannot quiet conscience, or satisfy his desires, when he is become thoroughly awake. He sees those things to be most valuable, in which once he saw no comeliness, or none in comparison with other things; for the scales are turned: as the Apostle says of himself, *Phil. iii. 7. What things were gain to me, those have I counted loss for Christ.* The different view he hath of his own case, alters his value for the remedy: now he values a Saviour above all the world; as a man in miserable captivity would value a redeemer, or as a dying malefactor would esteem a pardon. Formerly he preferred those things, which would promote the interests of the body, or the gratification of the flesh; and reckoned those the worst evils, which touched him in his bodily ease or pleasure, or worldly reputation: but his estimate of things is now measured most by the relation they bear to the interests of his soul. Instead of valuing most a day of diversion, or of worldly gain; a
day

day in God's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. And he esteems the reproach of Christ, reproach with Christ, more than all the treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 26.

3. A new turn is given to the reasoning faculty, and a new use made of it. When the word of God is *mighty, it casts down imaginations*; so we render the word *διαλογισμὸς*, 2 Cor. x. 5. It properly signifies *reasonings*. Not that the faculty itself is altered; or that when men begin to be religious, they lay aside reasoning: then in truth they act with the highest reason; they reason most justly, and most worthy of their natures. But now the wrong bias which was upon the reasoning faculty, from old prejudices and headstrong inclinations, is in a good measure taken off; so that, instead of its being pressed at all adventures into the service of sin, it is employed a better way, and concludes with more truth and impartiality. The unrenewed mind is ready to catch at any plausible pretence, in favour of what is loved and liked; and to take advantage even from the plainest truths of the gospel, which in their just consequence have the greatest influence upon holiness, to make conscience easier in sin. But when the soul begins to be released from its intanglements, the reasoning will be in a very different strain. The Gospel proclaims these glad tidings, that *where sin abounded, grace*

did much more abound, Rom. v. 20. A presumptuous sinner is ready to draw this rash conclusion from it; *Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound*, Rom. vi. 1. *God forbid*, says the enlightned mind; *the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. *The goodness of God leadeth to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. Suppose this principle under consideration, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save even the chief of sinners*: the one infers some hope from this, though he should still go on in the way of his evil heart; the other considers Christ's design, that he came to *save us from our sins*, Mat. i. 21. and therefore infers his own obligation to *live no longer the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God*, 1 Pet. iv. 2. When a resolved sinner meets with such a declaration as that *Many will seek to enter in at the strait gate, and shall not be able*, he may rashly collect that from it, which makes him more desperate in his rebellion: but a serious mind will make this proper improvement of it; therefore I must *strive in earnest to enter in*, Luke xiii. 24. and not content myself faintly to seek it. On the other hand, a presumptuous sinner, when he reads of the thief on the cross being made a monument of grace in his last moments, encourages himself in his present impenitency with the hope of a death-

death-bed repentance: but a man who is truly awakened, will make no farther conclusion from this instance, than that God *can* make an example of his grace when and where he pleases: he will not presume that he may depend upon the same grace in his last hours, if he shall continue to harden himself under a course of means, to bring him to repentance; or that one of the miracles of Christ's death shall be repeated for him in the ordinary state of things; or that he shall certainly share in like mercy, when he knows not but death may surprize him without any notice, and without giving him opportunity to shew such an illustrious instance of faith as the dying thief expressed.

4. There is an alteration in a man's governing aim, or chief end. This is like the centre to which all inferior aims and particular pursuits tend. The original end of a reasonable creature must be to enjoy the favour of God as his supreme happiness, to be acceptable and pleasing to him. By the disposition of depraved nature we are gone off from this centre, and have changed our bias, from God to created good, to the pleasing of the flesh, to the gratification of our own humour, or to the obtaining of some present satisfaction, according to the prevailing dictate of fancy or appetite. This makes the greatest turn that can be in the spirit of the mind: all must be out of course till this is

set right. Now it is the most essential part of the new nature, to bring a sinner in this respect to himself, that is, to bring him back to God. All the light he receives, all the rectification of his judgment, is in order to this; and when this is well settled, every thing else, which was out of course before, will return to its right channel. A man is not a true Christian, till it is become his highest ambition to be acceptable to his Lord, 2 Cor. v. 9. Then his soul will give suffrage to the Psalmist's choice, *Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.* Others are wearying themselves in quest of happiness, from one thing to another, as uncertain where to fix for finding it: repeated disappointments lead them often to change their course and their aim; when one thing answers not expectation, they hope to make amends by a new pursuit; but still they continue within the enchanted circle of worldly good. A true Christian, on the contrary, writes vanity upon all things below; they will not satisfy him: and therefore he is come to a point where to fix his happiness: *The Lord is the portion of his inheritance.* Here he rests, and is determined to pursue his favour as his supreme good, and last end.

5. There is hereupon a new determination to such a course of acting as will most effectually secure this end. As long as this world

world is the chief good which a man has in view, he contrives the best ways he can think of to promote his particular ends in it. But when the favour of God comes to have the principal share in his esteem, he carefully examines, and heartily consents to the prescribed terms of making that sure. Now he is desirous to be found in Christ upon any terms. He arises and returns to his Father, *with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord*, Acts xi. 23. He engages in wisdom's ways in earnest, with a resolution like that of the Psalmist, *Psal. cxix. 106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* There is no known duty, but he determines to be found in the practice of it; even the most difficult and hazardous, the most self-denying and ungrateful to flesh and blood. Spiritual and holy exercises, for which he had no gust before, are chosen for his delightful employment, as most subservient to his new end. The language of his heart is, *I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, I will call upon him as long as I live.* And his resolutions are equally firm and impartial against sin, every known sin. *I am purposed, that even my mouth shall not transgress*, Psal. xvii. 3. This is a new temper of soul; either the reverse of his former resolutions, or very different from them in firmness and stability, being made in earnest and with his whole heart: whereas
before

before goodnefs was as the morning cloud, or as the early dew, which paffes away. And yet his purpofes are not made in his own ftrength, which it may be was one grand defect in thofe that he formerly made under fome ineffectual convictions, but in dependence upon the grace of Chrift.

6. The exercife of the affections becomes very different. A change will appear in this refpect, through the different turns of his condition, as well as in the prevailing tenor of his practice. While a man is a ft ranger to God, and blind to the interefts of his foul, he is little concerned how matters lie between God and him: but a finner *come to himfelf*, is moft tenderly concerned at any thing that renders his intereft in God doubtful, or brings his covenant-relation into queftion; and nothing fets the fprings of godly forrow flowing fo much, as the confcioufnefs of guilt, or of any unworthy behaviour to God. And on the other hand, though he is not got above all relifh for the comforts of a prefent life; yet he has the moft lively and lafting tafte of fpiritual bleffings. He rejoices moft in a folid hope of God's fpecial favour thro' Chrift, in any conqueft he can difcern over fin and temptation in the progrefs of the divine life, and in the foretaftes of glory. He reflects with fatisfaction only upon thofe religious exercifes wherein he has found pious and devout affections in his own breaft, and
some

some testimonies that God has accepted his offering. The good laid up for him in the promises of God, yields more refreshment to his soul than all the worldly good he has in possession. And when his outward circumstances can minister least to his satisfaction, yet he can find rest to his soul in his God. *Habak. iii. 17, 18. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

Those who have learned Christ to saving purpose, are not, as I apprehend, strangers to some such change in the spirit of their mind, as has been described. It will be our wisdom then to bring all home by proper *reflections*.

1. Let us seriously examine our own minds, whether we can discern such an alteration made in our spirit. I am far from saying that it is necessary to the well-grounded hope of *all*, that they should be able to discern the time when this change began to be made; or that they can remember the time when the contrary to this renewed temper acted in its full force in them. There is a great difference in this matter, between those who, like *Samuel*, grew up before the Lord, under the advantageous and successful influence of a
pious

pious education, and those converted from gross ignorance and a vicious course. The apostle in the text speaks to persons converted from heathenism, and from all the licentiousness which reigned with little controul in the pagan world; such could not but be sensible of the difference between their former state and their present, if they were now become true christians; what a new thing the christian temper was in them. And the same can hardly fail to be the case with those still, who are recovered from a very profligate and irreligious course. But though the christian spirit is to all, who share in it, a new and a different spirit from the temper of depraved nature; yet in some who have escaped the pollutions that are in the world, and been from their infancy under the means of grace, the change may have begun so early, and proceeded so gradually, that they are not able to trace the steps of their renovation, or to remember the time when the frame of their souls was entirely the reverse of what it is at present. The grand inquiry therefore which lies upon all, is, whether we can discern in ourselves the change itself, or that temper of mind which the Scripture describes as a new spirit, and which we cannot but see to be a spirit very different from that which *works in the children of disobedience*? If we cannot remember when it was intirely otherwise with us, or how our minds came to be thus formed
anew;

anew ; yet are our souls *now* prevailingly so fet and bent, as the spirits of true Christians are ? Does our governing temper answer the gospel description of a new creature ?

2. If we must answer in the negative, or have just ground to fear it ; yet let us not despair of a change still, but apply ourselves speedily in the appointed way to seek after it. It is observable, that this renovation is made in Scripture the subject of a precept, *Ezek. xviii. 13. Make you a new heart, and a new spirit* : and in another place the subject of a promise, *Ezek. xxxvi. 26. A new heart, says God, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.* These two views of the matter may plainly teach us, that on the one hand, there is duty incumbent upon us in order to this end, or else God would never have delivered such a command to a fallen creature ; and yet on the other hand, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to produce such a change, otherwise God would not have interposed with a promise : but both laid together, carry an intimation, that the grace of God, which will be sufficient for us, may be expected, when we apply ourselves to our duty in the case. The precept delivered by *St. Paul*, backed with an answerable promise, runs parallel with this, *Phil. ii. 12, 13. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling : For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Our

Our duty in this case we are concerned to mind, in hope of the divine blessing. And it lies upon us to set ourselves to serious consideration; to review our sins in their number and aggravations; to meditate on the indispensable necessity of a new nature, that *except we are born again, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; to think of the good-will of God to sinners, and the encouragements he has given us to pray for his grace, if we are convinced of our need of it; to call to mind the kind aspect of Christ's death upon the salvation of mankind, and the general promiscuous offer of the grace of the Gospel wherever it comes: These subjects of consideration we are in some measure capable of as we are reasonable creatures, and under the common influences of the divine Spirit accompanying the Gospel; and though no such steps taken by us can deserve his renewing grace, yet they put our souls into the posture which he requires from us, and are a hopeful symptom of success. We should also diligently attend upon God's stated ordinances; remembering that *faith usually comes by hearing*: and continue instant in prayer to God, upon the foot of the convictions already impressed on our minds. It is worth our notice to this purpose, that after God had made the promise of giving a new heart, and of other covenant blessings, he adds, that *he would yet for this be enquired of, to do it for them,*

Ezek.

Ezek. xxxvi. 37. And we know the general encouragement left us to hope, that *the heavenly Father*, the common Father in heaven, will give his holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13.

3. Let the best retain a sense of the imperfection of the new nature in them, and of their obligation still to cultivate it till it arrive at perfection: that till they put off the body, there will be daily occasion to be *putting off the old man*, and *putting on the new*. If the change is begun, advance and improvement is a more easy thing, and what we have a covenant-security for in the way of duty.

S E R M O N III.

 The Christian Temper a Divine Nature.

2 PET. i. 4. the middle of the verse.

—*That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature*—

I Shall look no farther back into the context, than to observe, that the Apostle takes notice in the beginning of this verse, that there *are given unto us* in the Gospel *exceeding great and precious promises*: Promises very great in themselves; and such as deserve to be precious and of high esteem with us, because they are quite contrary to what we had reason to expect, and yet perfectly suitable to our wants, and conducive to our happiness. And then, in the words chosen for my present subject, he acquaints us with the design of God in giving out such excellent promises; *That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.* Now,

i. This

1. This may be understood as a privilege; and so *the divine nature* will mean God himself. *That by these promises, by conferring on us the blessings promised in the Gospel, ye might have fellowship with the divine nature.* That construction may be put upon the words, *γένομεθε δεύτας κοινωνοὶ χάριτος*; and so they will contain a certain truth. It was the gracious purpose of God, by the Gospel to raise sinful creatures to a sort of alliance with God; to a federal union with him by Christ, to the dignity of his children, to have his spirit dwelling in them, and to be allowed fellowship and communion with him. In this view, the intention of God, as represented here, would amount to much the same with that assigned by another apostle, *1 John i. 3.* *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* “ We
 “ Apostles make known the Gospel to you,
 “ that you may have a share along with us
 “ in the blessings tendered in it: And it is
 “ no contemptible thing we offer you a share
 “ in, it is no less than a share with the Fa-
 “ ther, and with his Son Jesus Christ, *i. e.*
 “ in the blessings and favours which come
 “ from the Father through his Son.” But,

2. This is rather to be understood as be-
 speaking our duty; the *divine nature* here not
 signifying God himself, but rather divine qua-

lities, or a divine temper and disposition. I incline to think that this is the sense of the apostle; partly because in the original there is no article added, which should fix the construction to be, as in our translation, *The* divine nature; and therefore, according to the genius of that language, it rather seems proper to translate it, *a* divine nature, *i. e.* a temper of soul, which in a metaphorical sense may be called divine, because of the relation it has to God: and principally, because the Apostle himself appears so to explain it in the words immediately following; *Having escaped the corruptions that are in the world thro' lust; and besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, &c.* Wherein he seems to give a description of that which he had before called a divine nature, in the two great branches of it; the one, a purification from the corrupt lusts which prevail in the world; and over and above that, the graces and virtues of the christian life.

That which I propose in the consideration of these words, is, to treat of the christian spirit or frame of mind, in this view of it,

That it is a divine nature.

And it may be so called,

1. In respect of its original and descent: for it derives from God as the great author of it. If we partake of it, *we are therein God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. ii. 10.* This is the im-
port

port of those phrases so often found in St. *John's* writings, and I think peculiar to them, when he describes men of a holy disposition, that they are *of God*, and *born of God*. *He that is of God, beareth me*, John viii. 47. This Christ says in opposition to what he had just before declared to his unbelieving hearers ver. 44. *Ye are of your father the devil*. To be *of the devil*, was to be of a disposition, in forming which he had a great agency; according to 2 *Cor.* iv. 4. So to be *of God*, is to be of a temper of mind derived from him. *He that doth good, is of God*, 3 John i. 1. In the same sense good men are so often described as *born of God*, 1 John iii. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin*; doth not make an ordinary practice and custom of any known sin; *for his seed remaineth in him*, i. e. that holy disposition, to which he has been formed by regeneration, governs in him; *and he cannot sin, cannot so sin, because he is born of God*. The same thing is expressed by being *born of the Spirit*; as the work of sanctification is eminently the province of the Spirit, John iii 5, 6. *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh*: the nature or temper we bring with us into the world by natural generation, is no better than its original, carnal. *But that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit*: that nature or temper we receive by regene-

ration and the grace of the Holy Spirit, is like its author, spiritual and divine.

2. In respect of its bent and tendency, the new nature is divine; it leads to God. By the apostacy we are turned off from God, and averse to him; but the new nature carries us back to God. It was the great intention of Christ in his humiliation and suffering for us, to recover us to this. *He suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. And the scope of the Gospel, containing the glad tidings of salvation, is the same, Acts xxvi. 18. *To open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*. Indeed the renewed temper cannot be more emphatically expressed in a few words, than in these, being *dead unto sin, but alive unto God*; which the Apostle would have all professed Christians to reckon themselves obliged to be, *Rom. vi. 11*.

3. In respect of resemblance and likeness, it is divine. It is the glory of it, that it is a *god-like* temper and disposition. And this I take to be the main thing intended by the apostle in the character. God had it in design in all the methods of his grace, and all the blessed promises which he has been pleased to make, to assimilate us to himself; so to renew us in the spirit of our minds, that we should bear his image again. This was the glory of man's state by creation, in order to which God is represented as forming a consultation, *Let*

us make man after our own likeness, Gen. i. 26. and it was executed accordingly, *ver. 27.* So *God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.* And so the new spiritual man is *after God, or according to God*, Eph. iv. 24. and *after his image*, Col. iii. 10.

In treating of this argument, *that the christian disposition is a god-like nature*, I shall, I. Offer some things proper to be considered for the due stating of this truth. And, II. Point at some principal instances wherein it appears to be so.

I. I would offer some things which I apprehend necessary to be observed, in order to state aright the meaning of this truth. For it is not without its difficulties; and we may entertain such mistaken apprehensions about the matter, as would be both dishonourable to God, and prejudicial to our selves. I would therefore observe the following particulars.

1. There are some parts of the renewed disposition, which do not connote any thing in God, that they properly resemble. Many things are excellencies in our nature, which would be imperfections in the blessed God. Reverential fear, humility, meekness, trust, subjection of soul, and a readiness to obey, are necessary virtues in a reasonable creature; but they can have no place in God, who is the supreme being. Faith in Christ and repentance for our sins are proper ingredients in the christian

stian temper, because we are all fallen creatures, and therefore cannot have access to God but through a Mediator, and with a penitent acknowledgment of our revolt: but nothing like these is to be supposed in God. Many acts of the mind are truly excellent and becoming us in the present state of things, for which even *we* shall have no occasion when we arrive at our perfect state; such as suit the present imperfection of our souls, and are owing to the corrupt affections, and appetites, and passions which have broke loose in us; and such as arise from the state of things in the world about us, the corruptions and follies of our fellow-creatures, the sufferings or the temptations to which we are liable. These are only accidentally become a part of the temper needful to be found in ourselves, by reason of the change made for the worse in our condition from our original state; and therefore for certain nothing parallel to them can be found in God, *in whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.*

.2. There are many perfections of God, to which the divine nature in us bears no proper likeness. To affect a resemblance of God in some of his perfections, is the greatest arrogance; it would bespeak a devilish temper. To pretend to independance and supremacy, as if there were no Lord over us, or as if we would have it so, is to flie in the face of God, and to put off the creature. To aspire
at

at omniscience, or the knowledge of things too sublime for our reach, or which God has forbidden us to search into, as the ordering of future events; is no better than to repeat the folly of our first parents, who were taken by this bait of the serpent, *Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil*, Gen. iii. 5. To set up ourselves for our chief good, as it is the perfection and glory of God to be his own happiness, is the very temper which christianity is designed to cure.

The divine nature in us includes indeed such dispositions as bear a *correspondence*, though not a *likeness*, to all the inimitable perfections of God; *i. e.* a temper of soul becoming the belief and consideration of such divine excellencies. We therefore place our supreme trust and dependence upon God, because he is the independent and all-sufficient being: we fear him, as the greatest and most powerful being; we love him and center in him as our portion, because of his infinite fulness and absolute perfection. These dispositions in us towards God do aptly correspond to and answer those excellencies of God, which are the reason of them: they are a proper regard to God, which is the strict notion of *godliness*, and so will be more fully considered hereafter; but they cannot so justly be called *god-like*, as when we imitate God in his *moral* perfections, wherein we cannot aspire at too near a likeness.

God is pleased indeed to put some faint resemblances of his *natural*, as well as of his *moral* perfections, upon his reasonable creatures; and upon some of them more than upon others. As we are intelligent beings, we resemble his spiritual nature, which the lower creation cannot do; upon that account he is called *the father of spirits*, Heb. xii. 9. Some are placed in a state of less dependence on their fellow-creatures, than others are. Some make far greater advances in wisdom and knowledge than others; are comparatively *wise as an angel of God*; and therein may be said in proportion more to resemble divine wisdom. Earthly princes and rulers have a much more extensive power and authority than the body of mankind, and therein are a shadow of the divine power and sovereignty: therefore the *Psalmist* says to such, *Psal.* lxxxii. 6. *Ye are Gods, and all of you the children of the most High*; i. e. bear some resemblance of his power and dominion.

And therefore the common distinction of the divine attributes, into *communicable* and *incommunicable*, seems not to be exactly just. There are, we see, some faint resemblances in creatures even of the *natural* perfections of God. Indeed *necessity* of being, *absolute* independence, the knowledge of *all things*, a presence *every where*, *almighty* power, *supreme* dominion, are appropriate to deity, and cannot be communicated to creatures; for these

these characters plainly bespeak that most perfect manner, in which these excellencies belong to God, and *so* they cannot possibly belong to any creature. But then there is as much reason to call the *moral* perfections of God incommunicable too, *i.e.* if you join, with the general notion of them, that most perfect manner, in which they belong to God: for so he is *the only wise God*, 1 Tim. i. 17. *There is none good but one, that is God*, Mat. xix. 17: *There is none holy as the Lord*, 1 Sam. ii. 2. But if we separate the most perfect manner of attribution from the general notion of the excellency; it must be confessed, that creatures may bear some likeness to God both in his natural and moral perfections.

Yet still it is only a transcript of his moral excellencies into the temper of our souls, that belongs to the new nature, of which the text speaks. Mens spiritual natures alone, though by them they are capable of bearing God's holy image, yet make them capable also of such a conformity to devils, as the beasts cannot have. Men may have much more enlarged capacities and extensive power than their neighbours, and yet be so far from partaking of a divine nature, that they are the more opposite and odious to God, and the greater plagues to the world. While on the other hand, those who are low in natural capacity and acquired indowments, or in very mean outward circumstances, may shine in that image of God, which the Gospel requires.

3. Where a holy disposition is a real likeness to God, we must ever humbly remember the vast disproportion between the original and the copy. The image of God is very imperfect in the best in the present state, even in comparison of what they themselves will arrive at in a future world. *God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all,* 1 John i. 5. By which, as the following words lead us to understand the apostle, the thing principally intended is, that God is holy without any alloy or mixture of impurity, or any possibility of it. How far is this from our present case? While the flesh is in us lusting against the spirit; while we have not yet attained nor are already perfect in any grace, even to that degree of perfection to which we shall attain! And even when we shall be changed into the same image *from glory to glory*, when our refinement shall be after the heavenly measure; there will still be an infinite disproportion between God and the most perfect creature. This is the ground of those strong figures, *Job* iv. 18. *His angels be charged with folly.* And *ch. xv. 15. The heavens are not clean in his sight.* Not that there is any actual impurity in heaven; but God is holy in a more perfect manner, than any creature is or can be. His perfections are necessary in him; it is impossible from the nature of the thing, that they should be otherwise: But this cannot be ascribed to creatures; *some* angels have

have fallen, and *all* the race of mankind; and though, as they are now in heaven, they that are holy shall be holy still, yet this is not from a necessity of nature, but from the grace of God. And while the divine perfection cannot admit of addition, we have reason to apprehend that the saints in glory will still be proceeding to higher and more complete degrees of conformity to God.

4. Those perfections of God, to which the divine nature in us bears some likeness, may in many cases express themselves in different instances in God and us, according to the different state and condition wherein he and we stand. The general notion of goodness, mercy, justice, truth, &c. is the same, when applied to God or to a creature; or else there would be no room for arguing from the one to the other. But as God is most perfectly good and merciful, and just and true, while we are imperfectly so; so he displays these perfections by many ways, wherein we cannot pretend to imitate him, as he is infinitely exalted above us: and he may do many things without impeachment of his perfections, as he is an absolute sovereign, which will by no means warrant us to do the like. To instance in the attribute of justice. God has a full right and property in all his creatures, and therefore an absolute authority to govern and dispose of them in any way he pleases: They have no rights but what are borrowed from him, and therefore

therefore none that can justly be pleaded against him. He must be just to himself in maintaining his own unalienable rights: But he may do what he will with his own, as far as his own wisdom and goodness will allow, or farther than he has been pleased to lay himself under engagements by promise. Justice in us requires our strict observance of all the rights which God or our fellow-creatures have from us, as he our Lord and lawgiver hath settled them.

The sum of all is this: As far as we are in a disposition to act like God, where we have allowance and ability to aspire at and express a conformity, so far we are partakers of a divine nature. I now proceed,

II. To point, at some principal instances, wherein the new nature is a resemblance of God. I shall not so much inlarge upon particulars here, as I should otherwise do, because most of them will occur again more distinctly to be considered, when several branches of the christian temper come to be treated of in order.

1. As it is a *holy* disposition, it is a conformity to a *holy God*. Holiness comprehends all moral excellencies, and an aversion to all moral evil; and therefore may be considered as including every particular excellence that can be mentioned. It bespeaks a general rectitude of nature, and a separation from moral evil of every kind. The new nature is said

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to be *created after God in true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. God's holiness is his possession of every moral excellence in the most perfect manner, and so as to be at an infinite distance from every moral evil, or what can be called sin. No attribute is more frequently ascribed to him in Scripture; and with peculiar marks of distinction. *Thou only art holy*, Rev. xv. 4. *He cannot be tempted with evil*, Jam. i. 13. *He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and he cannot look upon iniquity*, Habak. i. 13. *i. e.* without disapproving it. He is *glorious in holiness*, Exod. xv. 13. He reckons it his peculiar glory. But tho' his holiness is so complete and absolute in the degree of it, and so necessary in the ground of it, that in that respect no creature can be like him; yet it is represented as a thing in his design, *that we should be partakers of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10. And it is a precept to us, *that as he which hath called us is holy, so we should be holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. i. 15. This last passage may serve in some measure to explain, how we are required to bear God's image *in holiness*. We cannot perfectly be like him in this character in degree, but we should aspire to *be holy in all manner of conversation*: *i. e.* As God's holiness signifies the universal rectitude of his nature, and his utter aversion to all evil; so we should be adorned in heart and life with the whole chain of graces and virtues becoming our nature, and
abhor

abhor evil of every kind. We should not only be solicitous about one or another particular excellence, but an universal rectitude; nor satisfy ourselves with declaring war against a particular sin, but be at mortal enmity with every known sin. That, and that alone, is a Gospel-conformity to divine holiness: and where the divine nature is formed, there is that likeness, though not without imperfection in all.

2. As it is a disposition *founded in light and knowledge*, it bears in our measure a resemblance of God. Thus *the new man* is said to be *renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him*, Col. iii. 10. It is the peculiar glory of the blessed God, that he sees all things and all their relations in one entire unerring view; so that it is not possible that he should be mistaken or misled at any time, that he would do any thing rashly or at random. The acts of his will (to speak of God after the manner of men, and in a way accommodated to our apprehension) are always suitable to the perfect light of his understanding. Man in innocence had light sufficient to discern all that was right and fit for him to do, and was disposed to follow that light: this was the rectitude, the orderly state of his nature. But by the apostacy, the light which was in him is become darkness; ignorance and error mislead him, or the light of his mind is ineffectual, and over-powered in its influence

influence by headstrong appetites and passions. Now the first step towards a man's coming to himself again, and recovering the image of God upon him, is the re-entrance of light into the mind, and that with such efficacy as to renew the dispositions of the soul by it. Hence, as God's perfect holiness is described by his being perfect light; *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, 1 John i. 5. so our sinful state is described by *walking in darkness*; and our renewed state by *walking in the light, as he is in the light*, ver. 6, 7.

3. As it is a disposition to *righteousness*, to do justice to all, it is a conformity to God. *The new man is after God created in righteousness*, Eph. iv. 24. This is a perfection often ascribed to God. He is *righteous in all his ways*. *Is there unrighteousness with God?* says the apostle; *God forbid*, Rom. ix. 14. Though sometimes *clouds and darkness are round about him*, so that we may not be able at present to give a thorough account of the justice of his proceedings; yet for certain *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, Psal. xcvi. 2. And as this is a necessary perfection of his own nature, so he cannot but love it in his creatures. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness*, Psal. xi. 7. When the temper of our souls is to do righteousness, to give God his rights, and our fellow-creatures theirs, according to all the claims they have from us in our several stations and relations,

relations, this is a resemblance of God; and such a one as the Scripture makes necessary to prove our relation to him. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother,* 1 John iii. 10. Which last character leads me to observe, that the christian temper is eminently a god-like temper.

4. As it includes *goodness, love and mercy* in it. These are illustrious attributes of God, wherein he particularly glories, and of which he has given most bright and frequent instances. In these we are eminently called to imitate him. So great is the benignity of his nature, that it is said of him more than once, *God is love*: and correspondent to this divine excellence, St. John calls upon us; *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God: and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love,* 1 John. iv. 7, 8. *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,* ver. 16. And the exhortation to imitate God, which another apostle gives, though expressed in general terms, yet plainly appears by the connection to refer particularly to this excellence, *Eph. iv. 31, 32. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted,*

hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Immediately it follows, chap. v. 1, 2. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love. When we love all good men with a particular affection, because of God's holy image upon them, we write in our measure after his copy, for he does so too. But he is also good to all; his tender mercies are over all his works; creation, providence and redemption are full of the displays of his good-will and grace: he is rich in mercy to the miserable, to the unworthy, to his enemies. The evidences then of a god-like temper in us will be the more conspicuous, by how much the more diffusive, and free, and disinterested our affection is; by how much the readier we are to shew compassion to the miserable, forbearance to the injurious, and a hearty good-will to our enemies. The last instance of likeness to God is pressed upon us in the strongest terms by our blessed Saviour, Mat. v. 44, &c. I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, (i. e. shew yourselves to be so by acting like him :) For he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust. For if ye love them

[only] *which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same?* And he closes all with those emphatical expressions, ver. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* By which we may understand him to mean one of thesetwo things: either that in this branch of imitation, every good man should aim at the fullest conformity to God possible; here be perfectly like God as far as you can, there is no danger of overdoing: or, that there is no part of the image of God, which we can bear in this life, that is more perfect of our natures.

5. As it comprehends *truth and faithfulness.* It is the glory of God to be *a God of truth*, Deut. xxxii. 4. and of his people, that they are *children that will not lie*, Isaiah lxiii. 8. God is faithful to all his promises and engagements: *faithful is he that hath promised.* And it becomes us to be so in all the engagements we lay ourselves under to God or man; when we *vow, to pay unto the Lord*; and if we have *sworn to our own hurt, yet not to change*, i. e. if we have engaged ourselves even to a disadvantageous bargain with our neighbours, we must stand to it; which is made one character of a citizen of *Zion*, P^{sal.} xv. 4. God is sincere in his declarations; and so should we be in all our professions of respect either to God or man. If we profess *honour* and regard either to God

or man *with our lips*, while our heart is set a contrary way, this is altogether an ungodlike conduct.

I will conclude with some inferences.

1. We may collect what we should esteem the most substantial part of religion; that which constitutes a divine nature in us. This is the end of religion; and I may say, the very soul of it. Some of the wiser heathens were sensible of this, and the Scripture in the text, you see, makes it to be the design of the Gospel. Would to God, that none who pretend to religion, would rest short of this, or substitute something else in the room of it; either that which is merely external, or those things, which are rather the means of religion, than religion itself. And indeed we may have some light from this to discern what truths are of most importance in religion, and what errors are most fatal; those which most directly and evidently tend either to the promoting or obstruction of the divine nature in us.

2. We may see with thankfulness the advantages we have for a divine life beyond the heathen world, by the fuller notices given us in Scripture of the divine perfections, after which we are to copy. If men can be sunk so low, as to *think God altogether such a one as themselves*, in their depraved inclinations, it is no wonder if this sets them loose from all the restraints of virtue and goodness,

Psal. l. 21. This was the case of the heathen world: They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things, *Rom.* i. 21, 23. And along with this debasing of the blessed God by such mean and base images of him, they sunk so low, as to assign to those they worshipped the vicious affections and passions which were found in men and beasts. And then no wonder that we find what follows in ver. 24. that *therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, thro' the lusts of their own hearts.* God in just judgment left them to pursue the natural tendency of those unworthy apprehensions which they had entertained concerning him, to sink into all manner of vice, and to become like those false gods which they had imagined to themselves. Blessed be God that we have the knowledge of the living and true God: but we must be more inexcusable than they, if when we have righter notions of God, we should still continue unlike him, and bear more of the resemblance of the false gods which the heathen world worshipped.

3. We may see the necessity of the new nature, in order to our happiness in God, that *if we say, we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth,*

truth, 1 John i. 5, 6. It would be altogether inconsistent with his honour to treat us with special favour and friendship, if our tempers are contrary to his blessed nature for *he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him; therefore the foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all workers of iniquity*, Psal. v. 4, 5. Nor could we ourselves be happy in God, without a correspondence of temper by a divine nature in us. And therefore *he that hath this hope, purifieth himself, as God is pure*, 1 John iii. 3.

4. Let that therefore, which is here represented to be the design of the Gospel, be made the great aim and scope of every one of us, that we may be partakers of a divine nature. If we find another temper ruling, let us not rest till it be altered; if we feel somewhat of this godlike spirit working in us, let us daily cultivate it more and more. The apostle, I observed, in the following words, sums this up in two branches: escaping the pollutions which render us unlike God; and cultivating the graces wherein his resemblance consists. Let it be our daily care to do both.

To overcome and deface those impressions, which make us unlike to God; or to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, as in 2 Cor. vii. 1. To raze out the image of the *beast*, in the government of unbridled appetite and of carnal affections: and that,

which is yet more directly contrary to God, the proper image of the *devil*, in hatred and malice, in rage and cruelty, in pride and impatience, and revenge.

And besides this, to have those dispositions formed in us, and in more legible characters, wherein we are capable of the image of God ; or to be *perfecting holiness in his fear*.

In order to this,

We should carefully improve the consideration of gospel-promises, as we are called to do in the text, and in 2 *Cor.* vii. 1. *Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves, &c.* We have the promise of the forgiveness of sin : how should this excite us to forsake it, in gratitude to the wonderful mercy of God, and as ever we would not remain under the guilt of our sins, when a way is opened for our escape ? The grace of the Holy Spirit is promised, by which it is become a practicable thing, how low soever we are fallen, to recover this blessed likeness : it is his province thus to sanctify us ; and we are encouraged to pray for him to that purpose, and to apply ourselves to the mortification of the deeds of the body by his aids, as present with us, *Rom.* viii. 13. We have the great promise of eternal life and of perfect holiness and happiness therein, to animate our endeavours, and quicken our pace, that, if possible, we may *attain to the resurrection of the dead*.

We

We should improve divine providences to the same purpose. His benefits, kindly to draw our hearts nearer to him ; and his chastisements, according to their friendly design and tendency, to make us *partakers of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10.

And his holy ordinances, meditation and prayer, and praise, all our hearing and reading, and attendance at the Lord's-table, should always be engaged in with this view. We should not rest in them as our ultimate end ; but consider them as rather the *means* of religion than the *end* of it ; and account ourselves no farther the better for them, than as they promote our conformity to God.

If we make this our sincere scope and aim God will accept our upright endeavours, tho' we must be sensible we have not yet attained, nor are already perfect : and he will assist us by his Spirit to gain farther ground, and come nearer to our designed end. As we do so, our relation to God will become more evident our present communion with him more full, and the heavenly perfection a more grateful, and a more certain prospect.

S E R M O N IV.

The Christian Temper the
same Mind which was in
Christ.

P H I L. ii. 5.

*Let this Mind be in you, which was also in
Christ Jesus.*

THE apostle had been exhorting Christians, in the former verses of the chapter, to mutual love, and humility, and a publick spirit; and inforces his exhortation in the text by directing their eye to the example of Christ. “It becomes you
“ to cultivate such a temper in your own
“ minds, since Christ Jesus expressed the
“ same temper which I am recommend-
“ ing to you:” of which St. *Paul* gives an illustrious instance in the words following. But though his exhortation points particularly to those holy dispositions, which he had just
just

just before had occasion to speak of: yet the argument from Christ's example for those particular graces, equally holds as to others; and indeed supposes, that, as far as we can, we should endeavour to be of the same mind with him in all cases; that our minds should have the same turn and biafs, as Christ's mind appeared to have.

Christianity, as was shewn in the last discourse, calls us to a temper resembling the blessed God: that is the greatest character which can be given of it. But it is a more familiar view of it, to consider it as a conformity to the Son of God in our nature: and in this light I would now discourse of it, making this observation upon the words;

That the mind or temper of a christian should be conformable to the mind which Christ expressed.

In the prosecution of which, I would, I. Offer some things, which I judge necessary to be observed for the due stating of this point. II. Shew the reasons, why christians should be like minded with Christ. And then conclude with some reflections.

I. I would offer some things needful to be taken notice of, in order to the due stating of this truth, that our minds and tempers should bear a resemblance to Christ's. We are neither to apprehend on the one hand, that Christ gave us an example of every thing
which

which is amiable and necessary in our tempers according to the christian rule; nor on the other hand, that we should aim at an imitation of Christ in every thing without distinction, which we find in the Gospel-history related concerning him.

I. There are some things necessary to be found in the temper of a Christian in which we cannot consider Christ as an example. In particular, all those graces in us, which suppose our personal guilt and our fallen state, could not be exemplified to us by our Saviour. He *knew no sin*; but was perfectly *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*; and therefore could not express the dispositions, which only become us, because we had lost our innocence. For this reason we cannot expect to find in Christ's pattern either of those things which the apostle mentions as the sum of his preaching, both to the *Jews* and to the *Greeks*, and which are necessary and most amiable parts of the temper of a Christian; namely, *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xx. 21. He was so perfectly righteous a person, that he needed no repentance; and if he had needed a mediator to come to God, he could not have made reconciliation for us: but he is himself our mediator, in whom we as sinful creatures are required to believe and confide, in order to our acceptance with God. Faith and repentance suppose our revolt, and are

are necessary means and steps, in our present deplorable condition, to our coming to our selves. But Christ is to be considered as our pattern in all the holy dispositions becoming our nature in its original and regular state : he had that mind in him, which man uncorrupted should have, and to which sinful men are recovered in the way of faith and repentance.

2. There are some things related of Christ, which were truly excellent and amiable in him, but we must not pretend to imitate, *i. e.* not to do the same actions ; though even in them, the mind or temper, with which he did them, may be a subject of imitation to us. It is impossible for us to do some of the works which he did, and it would be impious to attempt others. One obvious distinction may carry us thro' this matter, namely, that we distinguish between what Christ did as Messiah and Mediator, and what he did as a partaker of the human nature. What he did under the character of Messiah, was peculiar to himself, and not designed to put us upon doing likewise.

Some things he performed to qualify himself as man for his extraordinary work ; as for instance, he fasted forty days and forty nights. This was done upon an extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit, *Mat. iv. 1, 2.* when he had newly been consecrated to his high office at his baptism ; and he must necessarily have had extraordinary supports in it. *Moses and*

Elias

Elias, two extraordinary prophets and types of him, had been enabled to do the same before him; as we read, *Exod.* xxiv. 18. *1 Kings* xix. 8. Now we may consider this act of Christ, as thus far instructive to us, that when we are called out to any peculiar service, fasting, and prayer, and retirement are very good preparations for it: but if any should pretend, as some enthusiasts have done, without a like extraordinary call, and a reasonable prospect of effectual support, to fast as long as Christ did; it would be tempting God to the last degree, and must end in their own confusion: or to call the observation of forty days, by fasting some part of every day, or by abstaining only from some sorts of food, an imitation of Christ's fasting, which was for forty days and nights intire without refreshment; is but to ape one of his miracles, without any support from reason or Scripture.

All those extraordinary works, which he wrought himself, or enabled his apostles and first disciples to perform, in confirmation of his mission and Gospel, must also be looked upon as things altogether above us, and which admit not of any imitation.

And the same is to be said of those things which he did in execution of his peculiar offices. As the great prophet of the church, he declared the hidden counsel of God; as the king of it, he sent out extraordinary messengers to be his apostles and ministers, he abolished

abolished the *Jewish* institution, and set up a new one; and as our high-priest, he offered himself a sacrifice. It would be blasphemy for any to pretend to copy after him in these things, which were his peculiars.

And when we find him giving severe names to the Scribes and Pharisees, and censuring the hypocrisy and false disguises of others, who made a fair appearance, which for certain he always did most justly, because he knew perfectly what was in men; yet this will not justify us in calling men *hypocrites*, and *fools* and *blind*, or in passing a damnatory sentence upon men who appear conscientious, unless we had his knowledge of hearts, and his special and extraordinary commission.

And yet, as was hinted, the *mind* and *disposition* he expressed even in many of his most extraordinary actions, may justly be considered for our imitation in our ordinary state. A cheerful obedience to God, and regard to his glory, an unwearied and vigorous application to his work, a zeal against sin, and love to mankind, shone forth illustriously in his extraordinary as well as his ordinary actions, and should excite us to be like minded. It is observable, to this purpose, that the very instance given by the apostle immediately after the text, is an *action* most peculiar to the Lord Jesus himself, and absolutely inimitable in the same kind by us; that when he was in *the form of God, and thought it no robbery*

to be equal with God, [the Father] yet he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death. Here the *action* of Christ, which the apostle singles out for his instance, is only proposed to our *faith*; but the *mind* and temper he shewed in that wonderful course of action is proposed to our *imitation*, i. e. the love to mankind, the humility, the publick spirit, which did so signally appear in his voluntary abasement of himself from the highest glory to accomplish the work of our salvation.

The sum of all is this. It should be our endeavour, as near as we can, to resemble the mind of Christ, as we find it described in the Gospel; to express the same mind in like instances, as far as we are in the same circumstances; or else to shew a conformity of spirit to him, in such other instances as our condition will admit, where we cannot shew it in the same. And so I come,

II. To propose some reasons why christians should endeavour to copy after the mind and temper of Christ. And to that end will insist upon three general considerations.

I. It was evidently the design of God to set his Son before us as the model of the christian temper. This was one errand on which he came into the world, tho' not the only

only one, to give a living representation of those graces and virtues, which are truly pleasing to God in the human nature. He would not only set out our duty before us in his laws, but also in the more striking way of a living and a strong example. This was not so needful for us in the innocent state, while the mind was sufficiently clear to apprehend the will of God without any prepossessions against it, and the inclination regular, God's law being written in the heart. But in our fallen condition, God saw meet in his wisdom and grace, not only to grant us the light of a supernatural revelation, to revive the notices of our duty, which were defaced, or greatly obscured by the apostacy; but also to set a fair transcript of that in our view in the living pattern of his own son in our nature, that we might be brought thereby at once both to learn and to love our duty.

We might reasonably conclude it to be the mind of God, that we should eye the pattern of Christ, when we find the Scripture directing us to imitate inferior examples, as far as they are good: *to be followers of them, who thro' faith and patience inherit the promises*, Heb. vi. 12. To animate our selves in our christian race, by considering *the great cloud of witnesses* we have to the like course among the excellent of the earth, *Heb. xii. 1.* And to *remember* inferior pastors, who ministerially *spoke to us the word of the Lord;*
and

and to follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation, chap. xiii. 7. Much more therefore, for certain, would he have us attend to the more excellent and instructive pattern of *the great shepherd of the sheep*.

The care he has taken to make us acquainted with the temper and life of Christ, is a clear evidence how high a place the imitation of him was to bear in christianity. It ought to be considered by us to this purpose, how great a part of the new testament the life and actions of our blessed Saviour make. No less than *four* Evangelists were employed and inspired by the holy Ghost, to leave an account of this for the use of the church in all ages; that by the mouth of so many witnesses, *who had companied with him*, all might be established: all of them joining in some things in the same testimony; and in other matters one supplying what the other had omitted. They, *who had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, as eye-witnesses*, wrote these things, in order that we might know the certainty of them, *Luke* i. 3, 4. Now as the intention of writing any life should be principally directed to this view, to lead others to imitation as far as there is any excellency in it; so, when the Spirit of God has made so great a part of the New Testament, to be a relation of the life of Christ, this is evidently his wise contrivance, to draw christians to a resemblance of him.

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But this design is put out of question by the most exprefs declarations to that purpose. Christ himself took care to lead his disciples to consider him as their teacher, not only by his doctrine, but by his practice. *If any man will come after me*, he plainly tells his hearers he must *follow me*, Mat. xvi. 24. He must *learn of Jesus* to be meek and lowly; not only because he inculcated these graces by his doctrine; [Mat. v. 5, 3.] but because *he was meek and lowly himself*, Mat. xi. 29. His disciples must *love one another, as he loved them*, John xv. 12. Upon one occasion he chose to do a thing, which in itself was not absolutely necessary to be done either by him or by them in the letter of it, to *wash their feet*; on purpose by that emblem to convey this general instruction to them, that they should tread in his steps: that is the moral he gives of it himself, *John xiii. 15. I have given you an example, that ye shall do as I have done to you.* And when his apostles, after his ascension, had converted people to the christian faith, they refer them upon all occasions to the temper and actions of Christ, as a copy which they were expected by their christianity to write after: and they make use of one passage or other in his history, as the most powerful engagement to a correspondent practice. We are declared to be *predestinated by God to be conformed to the image of his Son*, Rom. viii. 29. Our christi-

Christian calling is reduced to this, that we should follow Christ's steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21. Our abiding in him, in the faith and profession of christianity, is to be proved by our walking as he also walked, 1 John ii. 6. And we are to have him in our eye, to look unto Jesus and his behaviour, in running the whole of the race set before us, Heb. xii. 2. And certainly the design of God in giving us the benefit of such an example, claims our closest regard. Especially since,

2. He was a pattern admirably fit to be proposed to our imitation: and that upon the following accounts.

(1.) He was an example in our own nature. We are called to be *followers of God*; and the new nature is, as has been shewn, in many respects a *godlike nature*. But in several particulars of human excellence, God cannot be a proper pattern. The difference between God and the creature, between the relation on his part and on ours, will not allow him to be an example in any of the duties of creatures as such. An independent being, as the blessed God necessarily is, cannot go before us in fear and reverence, in trust and confidence in another, in subjection and obedience to the authority and law of a superior. His perfect blessedness in himself makes it impossible, that we should have in him a pattern of the temper and behaviour proper for us under afflictions, because he is
out

out of the reach of any. His Majesty cannot stoop so low, as to teach us by his own practice our social duties to fellow creatures, because they are all his subjects, and not his equals. And if the Son of God had appeared only in the glory of his divinity, he could not have been our example in these things : but since he is become partaker of flesh and blood, his example is properly human, accommodate to our condition, fit to shew us how men ought to act.

Upon this account his pattern is more suitable, than an angelical one could have been. The scripture sometimes calls us to imitate the angels, in the purity of their natures, and their vigour and chearfulness in the service of God ; but they are not so apt to affect and influence us, as a pattern in our own nature. Christ had what they have not, like natural affections and passions with us by occasion of an earthly body ; he was subject to hunger and thirst, as well as we ; capable of weariness and pain, of joy and sorrow, of love, and compassion, and anger ; and therefore was the more proper to teach us how to govern our appetites and regulate our passions. He was the fitter to be an example to men, as well as a sacrifice for them, in that *he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16.*

(2.) His circumstances and conduct in our nature adapted his example to the most general

neral use. He suited himself, as far as he could do without sin, to the common state of human nature, that his pattern might be the more extensively useful. The greatest part of mankind are placed by providence in a low condition; and Christ by exemplifying the graces suited especially to such a state, accommodated himself to the instruction and benefit of the greatest number of men: and yet since it was the result of his own gracious choice, that he appeared in such a condition, though he possessed originally the riches of the Godhead, he loudly speaks humility to the greatest.

His conversation was with all the freedom and familiarity that could be desired. We find no peculiar rigours or singularity in his way of living; in which he takes notice himself of the difference between him and *John the baptist*, *Mat. xi. 18, 19*. He did not sequester himself from the world to live as a recluse; but led an active life upon the publick stage, appeared in the places where people were used to come together, conversed freely with all sorts, and went about doing good. This conduct made his example the more grateful, and at the same time to appear such, that every one in common life might feel himself under engagements to imitate him.

(3.) His example was perfect, so that it hath the force of a rule. This cannot be said of the best men upon earth; their actions
must

must be tried by a farther rule, before we venture to follow them. But it is the character of Christ's example, that it hath the authority of a rule, as well as the advantage of an example; so that other examples are to be judged of by it, *1 Cor. xi. 1. Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ.*

It is perfect also in another respect, as it exemplifies to us all the graces and duties of the human nature, as it came out of the hands of God: it was a living plan of the regards due from man by the divine law to God, to his fellow creatures, and to himself. I intend not here to go over the particulars of this great example; it may be more proper, as we go along in considering the several branches of the christian temper, to recommend each by the example he gave of it. To any one, who attends to the Gospel-history, it must appear, that humility and self-denial, zeal for God's glory and compassion to souls, usefulness to all and disinterested goodness, contempt of this world and heavenly-mindedness, patience under sufferings and resignation to the will of God in all things, eminently shone out in the man Christ Jesus: that he redeemed his time, improved all opportunities for service, sought the honour of God in all his actions, fervently prayed to him in all difficulties, trusted in him in all dangers; counted no service, no suffering too hard, to which he called him; and was obedient even down to death. In a word,

he acted just as men are obliged to act; and in all the parts of the christian temper, excepting those which suppose personal guilt, we may derive light and warmth from the steady contemplation of Christ's example.

3. The relations in which we stand to Christ, and the concern we have with him, lay us under the strongest engagements to endeavour a resemblance.

He is our best friend, vouchsafes to call us *his friends*, and has engaged us by the most endearing acts of kindness: and how easily do intimate friends run into a similitude of mind and manners?

He is our Lord and Master, and we profess to be his disciples; and certainly the disciple should be like his Master. *If any man will come after me, says Christ, let him follow me, Mat. xvi. 24.* Christ presses this argument with the greatest force upon his disciples in the days of his abode below, *John xiii. 13, 14, 15, 16. Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent, greater than he that hath sent him.* In the several sects of philosophers among the heathen, the practice as well as the precepts of their masters had

had a mighty influence upon those who called themselves their disciples: they were used carefully to record the actions of their founders, and to be censured or applauded by friends or enemies, as they degenerated from their virtues, or copied after them. Christ is *the author and finisher of our faith*, the head of our religion; and should not we resemble him, if we suffer ourselves to be called Christians from his name? Some of those among the heathen, who delivered the best precepts, were very far from recommending them by a suitable practice; and they did more hurt to the world by their ill examples, than service by their wholsom instructions. This was too much the case among the *Jewish* teachers in Christ's own time: he could say no more in their favour than this, *Mat. xxiii. 2, 3.* *The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses's seat; they are your stated publick instructors: All therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.* We must for certain understand him with a limitation, as far as they spoke agreeably to *the law and the testimony*; for he had admonished his hearers more than once, that sometimes they were *blind guides* even in their doctrine, and not to be followed absolutely in that. And still he was forced to add farther; *but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not.* While their doctrine was amiss in some things, their practice was much more irregular. But Christ

was a master, whose doctrine and practice was perfectly harmonious ; and therefore his professed disciples should hear him and follow him in both.

He is our head, and we are his members; and there should be a symmetry of parts. If we are Christians indeed, we are animated by the same Spirit : and therefore like fruits of the Spirit should be conspicuous in us.

He is to be our final judge, who will unalterably determine our state for ever : and whatever profession we make of his name and of relation to him, he will own none for his, who are destitute of his likeness. While *many will say to him in that day, Lord, Lord ; he will profess to them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity,* Matt. vii. 22, 23.

He is to be the model of our final happiness. It is promised us, that *when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is,* 1 John iii. 2. That must refer principally to the holiness and happiness of our souls then. And certainly, if we take real delight in the prospect of that future conformity, we cannot forbear aspiring after it and tending towards it now. So the apostle immediately adds, *ver. 3. And every man that hath this hope in him, [to be like Christ, when he shall appear] purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* Our future happiness is often described by being with the Lord : and how
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can we dwell and converse together for ever with comfort and satisfaction, unless there be agreement and similitude ?

I would add a few reflections.

1. We may plainly learn, that christianity in its main design is a practical thing, and not a mere speculation. As it might be made to appear many other ways, that this is a true character of it ; so it is evident, in that the great head of this religion first lived it himself ; and the scope of this religion is described in the Gospel to be our copying after that living pattern.

2. We may see the advantages we have by the Gospel, beyond any other dispensation, for true goodness. *Moses* by whom God delivered his law to the *Jews*, was not a perfect pattern of obedience to the will of God, as far as it was then made known. But *Christ*, as he made a fuller revelation of the mind of God to the world than ever was done before, so he never failed in any one instance of exemplifying the proper duty of man.

3. How inexcusable then must they be, who are not recovered to a godlike temper and conversation by this most excellent dispensation? Where we have not only the most perfect and plain precepts, and the most exceeding great and precious promises, but also the most full and lively, the most suitable and engaging example. *If the word spoken by*
angels

angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord? Heb. ii. 2, 3. Or if we neglect to comply with so excellent a constitution, which the Son of God himself not only taught us, but exemplified to us?

4. With what care and attention should we study the life of Christ, as it is drawn in the Gospel-history? Indeed every thing which God hath thought fit to reveal, must be worthy of our diligent and serious consideration. *All Scripture is written by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,* 2 Tim. iii. 16. And no part of Scripture must be magnified to the depreiating of others. But certainly none can be more useful and necessary, more fit for our frequent search and meditation, than that which gives us the picture of the mind and life of our master; that while we stedfastly behold in the glass of the Gospel the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And that leads me to infer,

5. We should earnestly pray for the grace of the same divine Spirit with which Christ was anointed *without measure*, in order to our being formed to the same mind in our measure. In vain will the bright representa-
tion

tion of the holy mind of Christ be set before us in the Gospel, unless the blessed Spirit open our eyes, and cause the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ to shine into our hearts. But this we are directed to ask for, and encouraged to hope we shall not be denied, if we cry to the common Father for this great gift, *Luke xi. 13.*

6. Let us never allow ourselves to rest in any thing short of a real and growing conformity to our Lord. By this we should judge of our relation to him, and of his complacency in us; and not merely by the name we bear, or the notions that fill our minds. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9.* Study then so to *know him*, as to *be made conformable to him*, *Phil. iii. 10.* Reckon every view you take of him, every thought you have of him, occasioned by reading or hearing concerning him, to be indeed of little service to you, if it has no transforming influence. Go on then still *following after this, if that you may apprehend that, for which also you are apprehended of Christ Jesus,* *ver. 12.*

7. As far as this is our aim and scope, we may take comfort from the discovery of his present glory. For, as his heavenly mind and conversation ended in the heavenly glory; so a present imitation of him by us, as he was upon earth, is indeed a pledge of our
future

future conformity to him in the upper world. *As if we suffer with him*, so especially if we live with him and like him, *we shall also reign with him.* If, as he did, we live to God, are dead to sin, overcome the world, serve our generation, and persevere to the end in the exercise of christian graces and virtues, suitable to the conditions and circumstances of life, through which we pass; we shall, at the end of such a course, follow him into his kingdom.

S E R M O N V.

A carnal and a spiritual Mind.

R O M. viii. 6.

For to be carnally-minded, is death : but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.

IN the former part of this epistle the apostle describes the sinful state, in which the whole world is involved, whether *Gentiles* or *Jews* : they are all become guilty before God, and obnoxious to his wrath. He then shews, that the way of salvation for both, which was always designed in the counsel of God, and gradually made known to the world, but now most fully in the Gospel, was not to be by the works of the law, or by any merit of our own, but by the gracious and free pardon of our sins for Christ's sake, and upon faith in him.

But lest this way of justification by faith should be misinterpreted, and abused to encourage men in sin, and in the neglect of holiness ;

liness; the apostle in the *sixth* chapter comes to treat of sanctification, and to shew, that the Gospel lays us under the strictest engagements to universal holiness; that our faith in Christ and our baptismal dedication in his name bind us indispensibly to this.

And in the first verse of the *eighth* chapter, he sums up both the great blessing of which he had been treating, and the holiness that he had been inculcating; and represents them as inseparably connected. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* This is a certain truth, that the sentence of condemnation no longer holds against real Christians, but all their sins are pardoned. But who are so in Christ, that they may take the comfort of this privilege? They, and they only, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* And after the apostle hath shewn, how effectual a provision is made by the gift of *the Spirit of life*, and by *God's sending his own Son* into the world, both in order to our pardon, and our recovery to holiness, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* he proceeds more fully to explain the character which he had given of Christians, and to urge the necessity of it.

Would you know whether you are in Christ, and may be esteemed in the sense of the Gospel to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit? The apostle tells you, *ver. 5. They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of*
the

the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. And to shew that it is of the utmost consequence to us, as ever we would escape condemnation, to see that we mind not the things of the flesh, but those of the Spirit; he adds in the text, *For to be carnally minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.*

In the words we have,

I. Two very opposite characters; to be *carnally minded*, and to be *spiritually minded*. Characters, which divide all mankind into two parties. Every man must be denominated either the one or the other of these. However people may agree or disagree in other things, here is the most essential and wide difference that can be between man and man, that some are *carnally*, and others *spiritually minded*. And yet on the other hand, there is often such a mixture in the temper of those to whom these very different characters belong, that contributes not a little on both sides to darken the character, unless diligent care and serious consideration be used to know, which in truth is our own. But then, to excite our concern for making this discovery, and to convince us of the great preference due to the one above the other;

II. The horrid evil and miserable effects of the one, and the excellence and good consequence

quences of the other, are set before us. The one *is death*, and, as it follows in the next verse, *enmity against God*: but the other *is life and peace*.

I shall pursue the subject under these two general heads, into which it has been branched.

I. I am to explain the different tempers of mind, which are expressed here, and opposed the one to the other, φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός, and φρόνημα τῷ πνεύματι; literally translated, *the minding of the flesh, and the minding of the spirit*.

The *flesh* and the *spirit* may be understood here, either as principles, or as objects of those exercises of the mind meant by the word, φρόνημα. Either such a disposition and exercise of the mind, as has its original and rise from the flesh or the spirit: or else an addictedness in the temper and actings of the mind toward the one or the other. Indeed both of these will come to much the same at last: whether flesh or spirit be our governing principle, still there will be an answerable bias upon the actings of the mind toward those things which suit either the one or the other. But the *fifth* verse plainly leads us to consider them as different objects of the mind's exercise: and accordingly I shall treat of them in that view. And it will be needful more particularly to explain, I. The two opposite objects, about one of which the mind is sup-
posed

posed to be conversant; the *flesh*, and the *spirit*. II. That temper of mind with reference to the one or the other, which the apostle's expression denotes, and which makes the difference between men; upon which some may be stiled *carnally*, and others *spiritually minded*.

First, For the meaning of the terms, *flesh* and *spirit*, which are here, and in many other places, especially of St. *Paul's* epistles, opposed one to the other; it may be proper to observe *two* or *three* things.

I. The ground of the distinction is plainly laid in the original frame of human nature, as it consists both of body and soul. These two parts of man are of a nature very unlike, and yet linked together by our great creator in a very close and intimate union. By the one, we are nearly allied to earth and sensible things; by the other, to God and things spiritual and heavenly. Now tho' all thought, and inclination, and affection are properly seated in the soul, and not in the body; yet the body has wants and interests of its own, as well as the soul has others peculiar to itself. And the soul has many thoughts and inclinations, many gratifications and uneasinesses, which are only owing to its union with the body, and for which there would be no room, if it was a pure spirit: such are, appetites and affections to sensible good, and joys and sorrows upon account of present good and evil.

On the other hand, beside these, the soul is capable of thoughts and inclinations much more sublime, and worthy of the superior excellence of its nature above the body. It is capable of bearing the image of God in all moral excellencies and perfections, and of enjoying the favour of God, and a happiness in that, far above all which can be derived from worldly good. With such capacities man was made; and at first he was actually disposed and bent to regard most these best and noblest interests of man, and the concerns of the body only in a subservience to the other. But it was possible, that the soul might turn off its attention from its own proper interests, and mind those of the body supremely: man might, if he would be so foolish, give up reason and his higher powers to the sway of appetite and passion. And so we find by Scripture, and sad experience, that he did. *Man that was in honour, understood not; but became like the beasts that perish*, Psal. xlix. 20. In this distinction between the different interests of body and soul, the distinction between flesh and spirit is founded. But then,

2. These terms, in the common language of the New Testament, directly and commonly signify the human nature, either as actually depraved, or as rectified and recovered.

By *the flesh* is meant, not only the body and its interests; but the mind, as actually sunk into body; inflaved by it in its actings; inordinately

dinately addicted to it, even to the neglect of its own proper and peculiar interests: which is the very heart of the apostacy. The *flesh* signifies the mind along with its carnal biases, as it is become disaffected to God and holiness, indifferent for his favour, but strongly bent to sensible good, to the indulgence of affections upon earth, and to the gratification of appetite and passion. In this sense we must understand the apostle, when he speaks of *walking after the flesh*, ver. 1, 4. when he says, ver. 8. that *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*: and to the converted *Romans*, *ye are not in the flesh*, ver. 9. It is evident, that he cannot mean in these places, by being in the flesh, meerly being in the body; but being under the power and dominion of depraved nature.

On the other hand, by *the spirit* is meant, not only the soul in distinction from the body; but the soul, as recovered by the grace and Spirit of God from the dominion and prevailing power of inordinate appetites and affections, and restored to its right turn and bent in righteousness and true holiness. Thus we must understand *walking after the Spirit*, i. e. according to the dictates of a sanctified mind; or, which is the same thing, under the conduct of the Spirit of God, whose workmanship and image the sanctified mind is. And so in ver. 9. *Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*

3. These phrases, as they are used in the text to express the object of that exercise of mind, by which the different characters of men are drawn, must be understood agreeably to the foregoing observations. The *flesh* signifies the things of the flesh; or which are suited to the body, and to the depraved inclinations of the mind; sensible, present things; the interests of this life and world; which suit the inclinations we have, merely by occasion of the body; and which are most suitable to the soul, only as far as it is become of a carnal disposition. On the contrary, by *the spirit* are meant the things of the spirit; things of a spiritual nature, which are most directly suited to the interests of the soul itself; which conduce to refine and regulate its actings now, and to secure a happiness agreeable to its immortal nature.

The things intended by *the flesh* and *the spirit* here, are the very same as this apostle writing to the *Colossians* expresses by *the things on earth*, and *things above*, Col. iii. 2. τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, and τὰ ἄνω.

The *flesh* is the same with *things on earth*. Either such as directly interfere with the interests of our souls, as irregular appetites and passions, sinful habits and customs. These so generally prevail in the world, that the apostle *John* sums up all its contents in words importing our depraved affections, 1 *John* ii. 16. *All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,*
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the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Or even other things, which in their places and in a regulated measure we may lawfully be conversant about, may be included in *the things of the flesh*, or *the things on earth*, by an undue regard to which we may justly be pronounced carnally minded: the advantages, and honours, and pleasures of this life; riches and dignities, ease and health, friends and agreeable relations; aye, and the entertainments of knowledge and learning, as far as they have a reference only to our well-being or satisfaction in the present state.

The *spirit*, on the other hand, as the object of the mind's exercise, runs parallel with the other phrase of *the things above*; that is, a happiness as immortal as our souls, and all those things which have a relation to it. The bent of a good man's heart is toward heaven, as his compleat felicity; and to all those things by the way, which conduce to his final happiness: all those graces and duties here, which either in the nature of the thing, or by the constitution of God, are the necessary means and qualifications for the heavenly blessedness. The scope and end of these is our everlasting welfare, though they are to be pursued and practised by us in time. Thus, a divine temper and disposition conformable to God; a holy course and conversation; an acceptance and use of the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices; a participation of the blessings of the

covenant by the way, which will entitle us to, and prepare us for heaven; and such an acquaintance and communion with God now, as will be a presage of our everlasting enjoyment of him, and a meetness for it: all these things go to make up that object of the mind's employment, which is here called *the spirit*.

Secondly, I am to consider the different temper of mind toward carnal and spiritual things, which is here made the distinguishing character of one man from another; expressed by *ἐπόμψα*, *minding* the flesh or the spirit.

This word, and the verb, *ἐπορεύω*, from which it is derived, and which was used just before in *ver. 5.* are of an extensive meaning, sufficient to comprehend all the actions both of the understanding and will; but ordinarily in Scripture they denote the motions of the will and affections. The *verb* in one place signifies to *think* or *judge*. So in *Acts xxviii. 22.* We desire to *hear of thee what thou thinkest*; or what thy judgment is in the matter. At other times it means to *relish* or *have an affection* for a thing. *Mat. xvi. 23.* *Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.* And *Rom. xii. 16.* *Mind not high things; affect them not, desire them not. Or, to give preference* to one thing before another, to *pay it a distinguishing regard*. So the sense of the word is justly expressed by our translation in *Rom. xiv. 6.* *He*
that

that regardeth a day, regardeth it to the Lord :

i. e. He who regards one day above another, so as to observe it in a manner in which he does not observe other days, makes such a distinction out of a conscientious regard to a supposed divine authority in the case. Sometimes the term denotes *care* and concern, and an application of thought and endeavour suitable to it. So *Phil. iv. 10. I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again ;* that you have made your care and concern for me to be conspicuous in its proper fruits.

I have taken notice of these several uses of the word in Scripture, because I think they are proper to be laid together in the present case, and so will fitly describe the temper of the mind in the full compass, in which the apostle would represent it to us.

But because he makes this temper of the mind towards the things of the flesh and of the spirit, opposite characters of men, it may be fit to observe a few things beforehand.

1. There is a regard to our outward interests, as well as to those which are spiritual, which is not only lawful, but required of us in the present state. God does not command us to lay aside all affection to present good, or to use no care and pains about the welfare of our bodies. Though some precepts in Scripture, for minding the interests of our souls, may appear at first sight to exclude all concern

for our bodies; yet it is certain they are not to be understood absolutely, but in a comparative sense. Such as, *Col. iii. 2. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth,* *Mat. vi. 25. Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink.* And, *ver. 19, 20. Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth: — But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.* *Joh. vi. 27. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.* While we are in the body, God expects our regular care of it; he commands all to be diligent in their worldly business: and as he has given us all things richly to enjoy, allows our moderate and thankful use of them. All minding of the flesh is not unworthy of those who are spiritually minded.

2. There is too much of a *sinful* minding of the flesh by all good men in this imperfect state; which yet is not inconsistent with having the other justly made their denominating character. The best men find reason too often to complain of the remains of a carnal mind. *St. Paul* himself saw occasion for this in the *seventh* chapter of this epistle, where I think he speaks of himself when actually renewed, *ver. 18. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.* *Ver. 19. The good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do, i. e.* This is too often my case. *Ver. 23. I see another law in my mem-*
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bers warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. This drew out the lively complaint in the following verse ; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* Good men in all ages, who have been acquainted with their own hearts, have often joined with the apostle in the same mournful cry.

3. These characters belong to man therefore, not as if they were perfectly and entirely either the one or the other ; but according to that temper which prevails and has the ascendant. Persons may be carnally minded, and yet sometimes think of better things, form some desires after them, and take some pains about them. And on the other hand, men may in a Gospel-sense be spiritually minded, and yet not have their disorderly appetites and affections intirely mortified. Prevalence is the great enquiry we are concerned to make ; upon that the character of our state depends : and yet it must be remembered, that it will be unavoidable, that by how much the more strength the carnal mind hath, the more frequent and impetuous its actings are, and the less it is mortified ; so much the more doubtful in proportion must our judgment be about our state, or which of these characters really belongs to us. And therefore it is necessary for our comfort, as well as it is our duty, to see, that the bias the right way become every day stronger.

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Having premised these remarks, I would endeavour to shew, how the prevailing temper of the mind, towards the flesh or spirit, will express itself.

1. We are to consider this matter in the deliberate judgment and choice of the soul, with reference to the one or the other. The end men chiefly propose to themselves, has an influence upon all the other spiritual distinctions which can be between them. That man is *carnally minded*, who centers in any thing for his happiness short of God, the chief good: but he is *spiritually minded*, the language of whose heart is, *The Lord is my portion*. The interests of the body and of the soul, of this and of another world, cannot have an equal share in the esteem of any man, but one of them must have the preference. *No man can serve two masters* with equal zeal; or pursue these two ends, which are so vastly different, as things equally worth his care. The ruling judgment in a carnal mind is in favour of this world, whatever spiritual notions may be in his head, or light in his conscience. But a spiritual mind, upon a serious balancing of matters, is fully convinced of the reality and worth of spiritual and eternal blessings, above all worldly good. He is sensible, that earthly things, which are often leaving us, and which we must soon entirely leave, cannot be a portion for an immortal spirit; but that an endless happiness is set in his view, which is every way suited.

suited to his most raised desires: and therefore he judges, that this deserves an unspeakable preference. He esteems heaven a *better country* than this, and God the best portion, and Christ and holiness the only way to come at the enjoyment of God for ever; and therefore is determined at any rate to make sure of these.

2. The temper of the mind is discovered in the more fixed employment of the thoughts. That which we fix upon for our great business, will be very frequently present to our thoughts. A carnal mind has his thoughts most turned according to his biases; when better thoughts occur to him, they are rather forced upon him than chosen, or intended rather for speculation than practical improvement. The spiritual mind will set itself frequently and seriously to meditate on spiritual things; to make God present to the mind; to ruminate on the excellency, the grace, and the work of a Redeemer; on the glorious employments and entertainments of the heavenly world; on the several branches of his duty, and the state of his soul. He loves to have his thoughts exercised upon such deserving subjects, and cannot be content to have them entirely taken up with the world. He will appropriate some time, as far as his circumstances will admit, on purpose for holy meditation: *Through desire he separates himself, and seeks and intermeddles with this wisdom, Prov. xviii. 1.* Even in the midst of worldly business, he will
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will find opportunities to mix some serious thoughts; to lift up his heart to God in an ejaculation, when he has not leisure to pursue a train of thought. He is jealous, lest vain and worldly thoughts should gain too firm a possession, or give his mind too deep a tincture; and therefore will have times to recollect himself. This may be expected from such a man ordinarily on every day more or less; and especially that he will gladly improve the greater leisure of a Lord's-day to clear his mind of vain thoughts, and employ it fixedly in those of the best tendency.

3. It will appear in the bent of the heart and affections, either to carnal or spiritual things; whether *we savour most the things of God, or the things of men*, Mat. xvi. 23. Whether *we set our affections most on things above, or on things below*, Col. iii. 2. In both which places the Greek word is the same with that in the text. The current of desire runs strongest in the carnal mind towards some worldly good or other; while the *Psalmist* speaks the very soul of the spiritual mind, *Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* The delight and joy of those who are addicted to the flesh, is in the increase of corn, and wine, and such things; but the delight of the other is much more in the light of God's countenance, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* The one rejoices, if
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the body prospers and is in health; the other mainly upon evidence of the prosperity of his soul. He who minds the flesh, fears nothing so much as worldly exercises, or the loss of outward comforts: but he who minds the spirit, is most apprehensive of sin against God, and God's displeasure for sin. The one is most sensibly struck with sorrow and concern, when he meets with afflictions and trials, which are grievous to the flesh: the other, when he is conscious that he hath offended God, wounded his own conscience, lost ground in his holy course, given way to temptation, and done something which tends to separate between God and him. When the carnally minded are necessitated to make some reflections on their past sins, they fasten only on those which are gross and generally hateful; and they are most affected with the shame, or censure, or other temporal inconvenience that they suffer by them: but the spiritually minded are truly sorry for every known sin that they remember, tho' it should be ever so fashionable, tho' it has been invisible to men; and that which chiefly affects them in all sins, is their offensiveness to God.

4. In the activity shewn in pursuit of these several ends. If we act as in earnest to gain some earthly good, repine at no pains, but can contentedly sit up late, and rise up early, and eat the bread of carefulness for that purpose; while we proceed with negligence and
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indifference in pursuit of the prize of glory : if here we can satisfy ourselves with good words, cold wishes, faint endeavours, and very uncertain hopes ; such conduct is too plain a sign of the prevalence of the carnal mind. *Many will thus seek to enter into heaven, but shall not be able,* Luke xiii. 24. The spiritually minded will act at another rate ; they will *take heaven by violence*, and be especially *fervent in spirit*, when they are *serv'ing the Lord* ; as such who are determined to gain their point, whatever it costs them, and to run their christian race *so as to obtain*.

5. In the balance given to the several interests of flesh and spirit, when they come in competition. This comparative view sets men in the clearest light for discovery to themselves and others. Thus Christ put *Peter* upon the trial of himself, *Lovest thou me, more than these?* John xxi. 15. And in this Christ only called *Peter* to examine the state of his soul, by a rule which had been more generally delivered before, for the use of all his disciples, *Matt. x. 37. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.* The same thing is expressed in stronger terms, *Luke xiv. 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also ; he cannot be my disciple.* This hating
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of them can mean no more than a readiness so to behave in reference to them, if Christ and they come in competition, as without such a reason would look like *bating one's own flesh*. There may be occasions wherein we cannot maintain a good conscience, without going contrary to the judgments, and resisting the importunities of intimate friends and dear relations; or without losing the favour of those, to whom otherwise it would be our interest and inclination to approve our selves. Or the trial may go farther: unless we will forbear what we apprehend to be our duty, or do something which we judge sinful, we shall not only run great hazards in our own persons; but also the present interests of our families are like to suffer, and those, who are dear and near to us, to be involved in great temporal inconveniencies.

This is a very pressing difficulty, when God in his providence brings any to it; but after all, these are no better than fleshly motives, when set against duty and conscience: and here the carnally minded are like to break with Christ; but the spiritually minded will shew that their love to their master is supreme.

The improvement I would call you to make of this *first* branch of the subject, which I have gone thro', *viz.* an explication of the two opposite tempers mentioned in the text; is, to press you carefully to examine your selves upon this important and distinguishing head of religion.

It will be a very melancholy case, if those can make a shift to evade a conviction, that the bent of their hearts is wrong and ruinous, who bear undeniable marks of a carnal mind reigning in them : such, for instance, as give themselves up to *work all uncleanness with greediness* ; who live in a course of sensuality, *making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

But yet others should not conclude hastily, that they belong to the class of the spiritually minded, merely because they have escaped the gross pollutions that are in the world. It should be remembered that the young man in the Gospel could say this, and yet had that love of present things predominant in him, tho' unperceived by himself till the trial, which induced him to leave Christ, when he must either abandon him or his portion in this life, *Mat. xix. 20—22.*

Let none think themselves freed from the ascendant of a carnal mind, barely because they stately attended on the outward means which are appointed for their spiritual advantage. Christ has intimated, that men may *pray, and fast, and give alms, only to be seen of men*, *Mat. vi.* which is a meer carnal aim : and that they may *eat and drink in his presence*, and yet be pronounced by him *workers of iniquity.*

Esteem not your selves among the spiritual, barely because you are right in your opinions,
or

or because you receive the truths of the Gospel with a flash of affection. *The devils believe the most important truths, and tremble at them: And we find, the stony ground received the word with joy.*

In truth, you should rest upon nothing as a foundation for a favourable judgment concerning yourselves, short of what will prove a prevailing bent of heart to the spirit, more than to the flesh: that is, that commonly the bias turns this way; that this is your allowed and approved temper; that your relish of spiritual things has a suitable practical influence; and that you are upon the advance in such a disposition, tending toward the perfect day.

S E R M O N VI.

A carnal and a spiritual Mind.

R O M. viii. 6.

*For to be carnally minded is death : but to be
spiritually minded is life and peace.*

THE different tempers of mind, which are here expressed by the phrases of being *carnally minded* and *spiritually minded*, have been distinctly explained in a former discourse. I am now,

II. To consider what the apostle affixes to each character ; to shew the evil and hatefulness of being *carnally minded*, and the goodness and excellence of being *spiritually minded*. The characters are not more opposite than their attendants and consequences. *To be carnally minded is death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

A lively and moving description this is of that which stands inseparably connected with these

these different tempers of soul, though expressed in a few words.

Life is the most desirable thing that can be to most people. *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, will he give for his life.* And accordingly this word is used in Scripture metaphorically, to express the greatest good. *Death*, on the other hand, is naturally the dread of mankind; and therefore the greatest evils are in Scripture-language expressed by it. *Peace* joined with *life*, if we should take it in the latitude in which it is often to be understood in the *Hebrew* stile, comprehends all that is good and desirable. That was the *Jewish* salutation, *Peace be unto you*; as if it was said, All happiness to you. But the sense of the word here seems rather more confined, and to stand opposed to that which is declared of the carnal mind in the verse following the text. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* It carries in it direct hostility against him, and therefore cannot fail to intail upon a man the dreadful misery of having God for his enemy; so it follows, *ver. 8. They that are in the flesh, cannot please God.* And how unavoidable is it in such a case, if a man has any sense left, that he cannot be at peace with himself? In opposition to this, a spiritual mind is peace. He who is of that temper is at peace with God, and has a solid foundation for peace in his own breast.

I shall directly insist upon the former characters of *death* and *life*; in the consideration of which the other will be comprehended. *Death* and *life* stand most certainly and unalterably annexed to these different dispositions of the soul, the *carnal* and the *spiritual mind*: which is true, both in the nature of the thing, and by the sentence and constitution of God.

1. In the very nature of the thing, to be carnally minded is death, spiritual death; but to be spiritually minded is life, the truest life of the soul. He who is carnally minded is truly *dead while he lives*, as is said of a person devoted to pleasure, 1 *Tim.* v. 6. *Dead in trespasses and sins*, *Eph.* ii. 1. but the spiritually minded man is *dead unto sin, but alive unto God*, *Rom.* vi. 11. This is a frequent method in Scripture of representing the case; and a very just and proper one: for, as far as the bent is toward spiritual things, so far the soul is alive in the truest and noblest sense. Life capacitates for action and enjoyment; death disables for both. And for this reason we esteem human life in this world most perfect, in that period which we call the state of manhood, in opposition to infancy and childhood on the one hand, and to infebled age on the other; because at maturity it is more capable of the actions becoming the reasonable capacities, than in tender years; and more fit to enjoy the delights and satisfactions, which are suitable to our nature, than in the decline of
 life,

life, when indeed we rather sigh and groan than live. Upon the same account, to be spiritually minded is life, the truest and most suitable life of a reasonable creature, whereby he is capacitated for the most exalted actings and enjoyments, or for the holiness and happiness of a spiritual life. And on the contrary, to be carnally minded is death; because it is opposite to both, and indisposes for both.

(1.) Spiritual-mindedness is life; for a man of this temper is disposed to the proper *acts of spiritual life*. He is not insensible of spiritual objects; but *the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shines into his heart*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. He apprehends the reality, the moment and worth of that which is contained in it. Before, he *understood as a child*, he *thought as a child* of these matters, being diverted from a close attention by the poor trifles of a present evil world; but now he *puts away childish things*. He is sensible of the peculiar wants of the soul itself, and most desirous to have them supplied. His heart breathes after God, and Christ, and holiness, and heaven. He endeavours to know his duty, and applies himself vigorously to the practice of it; and his greatest concern is for his imperfection in it, and for his acting in any instance contrary to it. His great conflict is against the remains of sin, the snares of life, and the opposition of Satan in his christian course. This is *life*; these are indications that a man is

spiritually alive, and come to himself, for now he lives unto God.

The carnal mind is the reverse of all this. He is under the power of death; having the understanding darkned, and prejudiced against the admission of heavenly light. He is insensible of the wants and interests, of the rectitude and depravity, of the soul; or unaffected with these things. He is either wholly, or predominantly, set upon earthly things, and such as tend farther to vitiate and enslave the soul. His mind is shut up against divine instructions and admonitions; and his will opposes the will of God, and exalts itself against the knowledge of him, and obedience to him: For *the carnal mind is enmity against God; not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be*, till it is altered, *ver. 8.* This is spiritual death; a governing temper of soul, which bespeaks it dead to all true goodness.

(2.) Spiritual-mindedness is life; because a man of this disposition is fitted for the *enjoyments and happiness of the spiritual life.* The soul has peculiar pleasures of its own, independent on the body; and they are the most sublime, and excellent, and satisfying of all others, of which we are capable. These pleasures of the soul result from the sense of God's favour; from the apprehension of the pardon of sin, and the hope of immortal blessedness; from a consciousness of the regularity of its own actings, and of victory gained
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over disorderly appetites, affections and passions; from the approbation of his own mind upon serious examination and reflection; from the pleasure of doing good; of honouring God, and of serving a man's generation; from the joyful sense of the light of God's countenance, and of communion with him in holy meditation and in the various exercises of religion. Such things as these are the justest entertainments of the soul: and he who is spiritually minded, seeks chiefly after these; and has a principal relish and delight in these, when he can perceive them: and in proportion to the degree of his renovation, he is fitted for them, and has his share in them at present. This is life indeed. *A good man is thus satisfied from himself*, Prov. xiv. 14. while *a stranger intermeddles not with his joy*, ver. 10.

But a man under the power of a carnal mind, is incapable of that peace and pleasure which are so relishing to a spiritual mind.

He is but ill disposed to discern and take in that which is fit to administer the highest delight to the soul. Such a mind has scarce any room for spiritual joys to enter; and no inclination to perform those acts by which communion with God is maintained, and the foretastes of heaven are received. The frame of his mind is set quite otherwise. He wants such a principle of lively faith, as gives that realizing view of spiritual objects, which fills with joy unspeakable, 1 *Pet.* i. 8. Nor is he acquainted with

that life and fervor in religious exercises, or that purity of heart, which are necessary to prepare for God's gracious manifestations to the soul.

Or suppose he should be able to discern the grounds of spiritual pleasure, yet he is no way disposed to relish them, or to be made happy by them. Instead of delighting himself in God, *he says unto God, depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that I should serve him? and what profit should I have, if I pray unto him?* Job xxi. 14, 15. He tastes not the sweetness of a pardon; he values not the dignity of being a child of God. A Saviour has no form or comeliness in his eye, that he should desire him; nor are all the glad tidings of the Gospel so welcome to him, as it would be to hear of an estate fallen to him, of a successful bargain, or any other present gratification which his heart is set upon. The very vision and enjoyment of the blessed God in heaven, would be an insipid thing to a man, the turn of whose soul is wholly to earth. Carnal minds account it no better than folly in other people, when they express a delight in God's ordinances, or speak of such a thing as *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*. The reason is, that either matters of a spiritual nature are in their account merely imaginary, without substance and reality; or some present good is much more suitable to their taste and inclination. Thus *folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom*, Prov. xv. 21.

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In the nature of the thing then, and at present, what the apostle says evidently holds true.

2. This is farther true in respect of God's sentence and constitution. *To be carnally minded, is death*; or the way to death, to everlasting wrath and misery: *but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace*; or the way to eternal life and happiness.

(1.) The carnal mind must issue in everlasting death. Not that the future punishment will be an extinction of being; happy would it be in comparison for the men of this world, if that was the case: but while they continue in being and sense, their condition will justly deserve the character of death, *the second death*. In the future state their spiritual death will be fixed and consummated. The enmity against God, which is now the prevailing character of a carnal mind, will then rise to its utmost height. All the remains of virtuous inclination, or of good-nature, as we call it, which might seem to be in men here, will be totally extinguished, when they leave the world in their sins; and *he that was filthy, will be filthy still*. There will be an intire end of all that looks like felicity: For they will be stripped of all the sensual enjoyments, in which they placed their happiness on earth; not so much as a drop of *water to cool the tongue* will be found there, *Luke xvi. 24*. And for the true happiness of the heavenly state, they neither will be admitted to a share in it, nor

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will have any taste for it, if it was within their reach. And besides this, all which can make misery consummate, will be inflicted. The wrath of a living God, the fire of hell, the worm of an accusing conscience, and the society of devils and wicked men, then ungrateful enough, shall concur to their everlasting destruction. The Scripture uses many phrases and emblems to describe that misery in its horrible nature; and, among the rest, this of *death* in particular, as the most formidable thing to nature. *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*, Jam. i. 15. *The end of these things is death*, Rom. vi. 21. *The wages of sin is death*, ver. 23. So here, *to be carnally minded is death*; that is,

Without repentance and a change before they leave the world, men of this character are doomed to eternal death by God the judge of all. *If ye live after the flesh*, says the apostle in this chapter, *ver. 13. ye shall die*. This is the sentence which God has published against all such; which he will never reverse, and none else can.

Such indeed, by their present temper, are fit for no other issue of things than this. They are *vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction*: In no fitness to take delight in a better world, if they should be allowed a place there, where all is holy and heavenly; but of a temper already prepared for the miserable world: for they breathe a disaffection to God, which
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in the height of it is the very temper of the devils.

And sometimes men of this make have the beginnings of this second death, even while they continue in the body. This is evidently the case of some, when they are given up to *strong delusions, to their own hearts lusts.* And sometimes they are made to feel the lively fore-runners of divine wrath in their consciences, and leave the world with the blackest presages of approaching misery. On the other hand,

(2.) The spiritual mind shall issue in everlasting life and peace; that which deserves indeed to be stiled *life.* The spiritual life is to be perfected. There is a *perfect day, to which the path of the just, like the shining light, is tending more and more,* Prov. iv. 18. What the author of a *good work had begun,* will then be *performed,* Phil. i. 6. *All tears shall be wiped away* from saints, and every uneasiness cease, for they shall *enter into rest;* and be admitted to *fulness of joy in God's presence,* and to *pleasures for evermore at his right hand,* Psal. xvi. 11. This is to be the end of a spiritual mind; and therefore it may justly be said to be *life and peace.*

By the tenor of the gospel-covenant, all of this character are entitled to this life. *There is no condemnation to such as walk after the Spirit,* ver. 1. *If ye by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,* ver. 13. And to the same purpose our apostle be-
speaks

speaks the *Colossians*, Col. iii. 2, 3, 4. *Set your affections on things above, not on things below. For ye are dead, (you profess to be dead to the world) and (if you are really so) your life (your better life) is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

The spiritual mind is itself a metemorphosis for heaven. As it is of heavenly descent, so it tends towards heaven. While the carnal mind in its progress is ripening for hell, the renewed temper makes a man *mete for the inheritance among the Saints in light*. Such a man has his heart, and thoughts, and pursuits, directed to the same objects, which make the happiness of heaven; only they are seen and enjoyed in the other world after the manner of heaven. The same God, the same Redeemer, the same holiness, which the Christian chiefly pursues now, will make the felicity of the future state: only we shall then *know* these objects *even as we are known*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

And those who have their minds thus set, have the beginnings and pledges of everlasting life. The spirit is *in them as a well of water springing up into everlasting life*, John iv. 14. He is an *earnest of the inheritance*, Eph. i. 13, 14. As far as they are spiritualized, they have heaven brought down into their souls; the same temper formed there in part which gloriously

riously shines in the inhabitants of the upper world; and therefore may properly be called glory begun: besides which, to some of his servants God has vouchsafed such fore-tastes of the land of *Canaan*, while they were in this wilderness, such refreshing views of his love and favour, as have carried them for a while in appearance above the world, enabled them to rejoice in tribulation, and to long to depart and to be with Christ.

Now certainly a mind, intituled to life by divine promise, made mete for it by divine grace, and into which God is used to let down somewhat of heaven now, cannot fail to issue in everlasting life.

I will close with some reflections.

I. We may justly fix this in our minds, as the principal and most important distinction which can be among men; the carnal and the spiritual mind. Other differences make a far louder sound, and draw more general attention. Distinctions made by wealth and honour, by beauty or wit, by learning or by party names, have many more observers and admirers. But tho' *the kingdom of God comes without observation*, and is chiefly *within men*; yet as far as its authority and power over the minds of men is discovered by the genuine fruits, it deserves more regard and esteem, than any other peculiarity wherein one can excel another. The question for divine approbation will not be, whether men

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are high or low, learned or unlettered, whether of this or that dividing name among Christians; but whether they *mind earthly things,* or *seek those which are above.* A man of low capacities and circumstances, may be rich in faith, eminently partake of the divine nature, and be an assured heir of the promise: And how much more excellent and happy is such a man, than any of those who make the most shining figure in life, if by choice and title they have their portion only in this world?

2. We may consider this farther, as the principal thing, wherein one christian is better than another. People of all parties are apt to value others most, when they agree with themselves in bearing the same name of distinction, in observing the same outward forms of religion, or in maintaining the same speculative notions. And, without doubt, tho' any meer name among christians signifies little; yet it will not pass for a small matter with those who are truly devoted to Christ, that they and others should form the justest notions they can of every divine truth, and observe the externals of religion in the nearest conformity they can to the rule given them; so far they, who agree best with the standard, certainly excel others. But still it is a more vital and important difference, which is made by the degrees of spiritual-mindedness. He is the best christian, whose soul is most fully attempered to spiritual things, and hath gone farthest

farthest in overcoming the remains of a carnal mind. This is the most essential mark of growth in grace.

3. If we are ready to entertain some high thoughts of ourselves, because we are reasonable creatures, and have the capacities of mind which those of the lower creation are strangers to; it is enough to mortify our pride, to think that this very mind of ours is become carnal. What can the nobler capacity serve for, but our greater disgrace, and aggravated condemnation, without a suitable improvement? Better had it been for us, that we had been placed at first in the lowest rank of beings, instead of the rational, if we debase ourselves into the beast, when God has made us men, if our minds are only employed to make provision for the flesh, or to refine upon the gratifications of the body, instead of reaching after and relishing the proper glory and happiness of an immortal spirit.

4. What reason is there to be thankful for that which we commonly call *restraining grace*? When a carnal mind is so natural to all, is still predominant in most people, and wherever it prevails, has so strong a bias in itself to all that is evil; in what a dismal state would this world be for the present, if it was not for such things, as the bias of a good education, the admonitions of natural conscience, the awe of civil magistracy, the sense of shame from men, the
pro-

providential preventions of opportunity for doing many evils, or staving off temptations to them? Such things as these, where a religious fear of God is wanting, are of great service to keep the world in tolerable order at present: without them, we should live in a constant hell upon earth, and one man of a carnal mind would be a devil to another.

5. When the human nature was sunk so low, it was unspeakable grace in the great and holy God, to take in hand creatures so carnalized, in order to their cure. That he should form a design of their recovery from such a degenerate state; and in order to it, should send his only-begotten Son to atone for this horrid apostacy, and restore his holy Spirit to recover lost souls to their true taste and primitive disposition. He saw the disorders of our nature to be so great and inveterate, that they would never be set to rights by any hand inferior to his own; that our case was desperate, and past retrieve, if he did not undertake it himself. And therefore, notwithstanding the heinousness of the crime, tho' he might justly have given up for ever creatures who had ruined themselves; yet, out of his abundant grace, he makes our recovery practicable, sets up an all-sufficient physician, and invites us to commit ourselves into his hands for healing. There is glory to God in the highest upon this account; let us, who are directly concerned, heartily join in the song of praise for this *good-will toward men*. 6. When

6. When a method of cure is settled by a gracious and all-wise God, how much does it lie upon every one of us in particular to see that the carnal mind is subdued in ourselves ! that at least, the mortal symptoms are taken away, that it has no longer the dominion in us. Without this change, all our profession of religion is a vain thing ; we shall only *have a name to live*, while really *we are dead*. Without this, we shall find, in the great day of account, that it had been better for us, if we had never been born, or never possessed of higher capacities than the brutes, or never favoured with the discoveries of the Gospel, which shew us our disease and the way of cure. Under a conviction therefore of our need, let us earnestly apply to God, thro' Jesus Christ, for the enlightning, quickening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to make us *dead unto sin, but alive unto God* : and under his gracious influences, which are readily granted to the humble and hearty seeker, let us resolve upon a vigorous and persevering warfare against the carnal mind, which *wars against the soul*.

7. How thankful should every true Christian be, that he is delivered from so great a death ! much more than for any temporal deliverance, that he has received or can receive. The evil here was the greatest that we could escape, spiritual death at present, and eternal death in prospect : we were fast bound in the

chains of this death, so that none but God could have opened us a way of escape: and notwithstanding the discovery of such a way, thousands in every age still remain in the same miserable condition. Let all that is within us then bless the Lord, who has made us to differ.

8. Let christians behave as sensible of their remaining carnality, and of its deadly nature, as far as it does remain. Let them live in the daily sense of this, that though the change in them be real and great, compared with the bent of depraved nature, yet it is incompleat in the best in this life; and as far as carnality remains, so much death remains. Let us all therefore walk humbly with our God, as sensible that he has still much against us, if he would be strict to mark iniquity. Let us watch against indwelling sin, the new actings of it, and the temptations which may excite it; because we have not yet put off the harness, nor can justly apprehend ourselves out of danger. We should use habitual endeavours to *mortify our affections which are upon earth*, Col. iii. 5. and to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*; as those who have not yet attained, nor are already perfect. And whenever by neglect, and the force of temptation, carnality breaks out afresh, or recovers new strength, there should be an immediate care to repair and strengthen dying graces, Rev. iii. 2. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready*

ready to die. And since we must have occasion for this conflict more or less, while we sojourn in the body, it must ever be worthy of a real christian, to look forward with longing expectations to the perfect life before him, where he will be entirely spiritually minded, *like the angels of God in heaven,* Matth. xxii. 30.

9. Let the consideration of the sad condition of carnal minds, engage all true christians in their proper places to use their utmost endeavours for the recovery of others out of such a state. This becomes heads of families towards those under their immediate care, and one friend towards another, and every one according to his influence and talents. We, who are ministers, should especially *be instant in season and out of season* to this very purpose; since it is the direct design and scope of a Gospel-ministry. And sure we need not a stronger motive to animate us all, than that which is left us by the apostle *James*, chap. v. 19, 20. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

S E R M O N VII.

Faith the main principle of
the Christian temper.

2 COR. V. 7.

For we walk by Faith, not by sight.

IT is plain from the context, that the apostle's main design in these words is, to express a disadvantage in a christian's present state, compared with that which he hath in prospect. He observes, that he, and such other primitive servants of Christ, *having the earnest of the Spirit*, or the Spirit as the earnest of the promised inheritance, *therefore were always confident*, ver. 5, 6. *i. e.* undaunted in their work, whatever difficulties they met with, whatever dangers they were exposed to, even of life itself: *knowing*, as he adds, *that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*. Or, as we may render it more agreeably to the emphasis of the original, "knowing, that whilst
" we sojourn in the body, we are absent
" from

“ from our home with the Lord.” *For we walk by faith, not by sight*; that is, “ While we are in the body, the main things by which we govern and conduct ourselves as christians, are only perceived by faith; not by sight, as they will be, when we come to be present with the Lord.”

Faith is represented here as a way of perception, which falls short of *sight*: and so it certainly is. But then, on the other hand, it is intimated to be the best and most extensive principle we have in our state of trial: a principle of force and influence sufficient to regulate our walk and conduct: a principle strong enough at that time to inspire the apostle himself and the primitive christians with boldness and courage in the face of danger; sufficient to make them willing to leave the body, that they might arrive at the higher dispensation of *sight*. So that the greatest heights of christianity in this world are set out here as flowing from faith.

I have therefore chosen this passage to shew the eminent place which faith holds in forming and animating the whole christian temper and life: *We walk by faith, and not by sight*. We christians conduct ourselves by faith, as the best principle of action we have, till we arrive at sight, and as esteeming it our wisdom to walk under the influence of it thro' our passage-state.

In the prosecution of this subject, I shall

I. Endeavour to give you some account of *faith*, the christian's principle. And,

II. Shew the fitness of it to have a most powerful and commanding influence upon the whole of the christian temper and life.

Which will make way for some serious exhortations.

I. The nature of *faith* is to be explained, which is eminently the christian principle

When we find it distinguished from *sight*, this at once points us both to the special objects about which it is conversant, and to that kind of persuasion which is implied in the term *faith*.

I. The special objects about which faith is conversant, are things not seen. This is intimated, when it is opposed to sight. And so they are expressly called more than once in the New Testament, 2 Cor. iv. 18. *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.* And Heb. xi. 1. *Faith is the evidence of things not seen.* By this representation of the things which the christian believes,

(1.) They are plainly distinguished from the concerns and interests of this visible world. The generality of people have their main regard to seen things, that is, to present things, which come within the notice of sense: they govern themselves chiefly by a respect to these; and

and have their hopes and fears, which are the immediate principles of action, principally raised by the apprehension of outward good and evil. Bodily ease and pleasure, external advantages and interests, honour and reputation among men, are the chief things they desire and hope for; and the contrary to these are what they principally fear. They *walk in the sight of their eyes*, as is said of sensual youth, *Eccl. xi. 9.* But the thoughts of a true christian have another turn: he hath obtained the notice of other things, beyond the reach of sense, and which relate to interests beyond this seen world; and these appear to him of such reality and weight, as to command his principal attention. Present sensible things have in themselves no farther reference than to our well or ill being in the present life: but the things of which a christian is persuaded, and by the belief of which he walks, are either the eternal state itself, or such things as in their tendency and consequence have an aspect on his everlasting well or ill being. *The things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal,* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

(2.) They are justly described in their true and proper nature, by this character, that they are things not seen. There is scarce a more comprehensive account to be given of them in a few words, than this character contains.

Many of them are in themselves of a *spiritual nature* and so not capable of being objects of sense. *God himself* is so: *no man hath seen him at any time with his bodily eyes*; and yet *Moses* is said by *faith* to have seen him that is *invisible*, Heb. xi. 27. And it is the concern of a good man to *set the Lord always before him*, Psal. xvi. 8. that is, to consider him as a near and constant spectator of his actions, and therefore to live and act as in his presence. The *providence* of God is out of sight, while outward events themselves are obvious to sense; and therefore most people have little regard to the one, while they have their heads and hearts full of the other: but a saint principally attends to the invisible hand of providence in all events, whether prosperous or afflictive. The *blessings* which are of principal account with a christian, come not within the verge of sense; such as, an interest in the favour of God, the privilege of being admitted among his children, the pardon of sin, the graces and comforts of the Holy spirit. And his most formidable *enemies* are invisible too; indwelling corruption, and the power and policy of the evil spirits: yet these are objects of faith, which excite his daily vigilance.

Several things which the christian believes, are *above his comprehension*; not only not to be perceived by sense, but not to be seen thro' with the closest application of the eye of the
mind:

mind : which are attended with many difficulties he cannot solve, as to the manner of their being, and yet he firmly believes them. This is the case of many of the divine perfections ; the doctrine of the resurrection of the body ; and the distinction of the blessed three, Father, Son and Spirit, which plainly runs through the œconomy of our salvation.

Some of the objects of faith are *things past and gone*. Though they were once seen by some, yet they are only offered to the faith of after-generations, and yet of the utmost importance to be believed. Such are, the creation of the world, the dispensations of providence in former ages ; and, above all, the Son of God manifested in flesh ; his life, and death, and resurrection and ascension into heaven ; and the divine testimonies born to the Gospel-revelation. Only a few in one age and part of the world, had opportunity to see these things ; they are matters of faith to such as come after them.

Other things are *at a distance* from us, beyond our world, too far for us to have any immediate perception of them. Of this kind is the present state of the invisible world ; the happiness of holy angels, and of departed saints with Christ in paradise ; and the misery and torments of those dead in sin.

And lastly, many of them are *future*. They are now only to be discerned by faith, but hereafter will be seen. Such are, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead,

dead,

dead, the final judgment, and the rewards and punishments which will ensue upon it. *Every eye shall see* the Redeemer, when he comes in the glory of his Father, even those who must *wail because of him*. And the great transactions, for which he comes, shall be managed upon the publick stage in the view of all. But now we see them only through a glass darkly, and at a distance.

2. The kind of persuasion which a Christian hath concerning these things, is expressed by *faith*, in opposition to *sight*. Now,

(1.) In a larger sense; this may signify a persuasion upon any other ground beside the evidence of sense; so as to take in *reason* and *testimony* too. So it is sometimes taken in Scripture. Some of the instances of faith given by the apostle, *Heb. xi.* are to be known by reason as well as revelation. Thus the creation of the world may be demonstrated by reason, and yet we are said to *understand it by faith*, ver. 3. God's being and bounty are capable of the same proof, and yet the apostle mentions them as objects of faith, ver. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* The perfections of God may be proved from the nature and reason of things, *Rom. i. 20.* *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,*
even

even his eternal power and Godhead. Indeed if these could not be known antecedent to faith, there could be no foundation of faith, no means of proving the credibility and authority of revelation.

Now a Christian, in many articles of his persuasion, walks by faith in this larger meaning of the word, in distinction from sense. He is far from renouncing the evidence of reason, as far as that will go. For truths within its province, he is glad of all the assistance and light that he can have this way: and for truths which he finds in Scripture, he endeavours to strengthen his faith by arguments from reason, as far as that can help him. But,

(2.) More strictly and eminently, faith in Scripture signifies a persuasion founded upon the testimony of God; upon a conviction that *the testimony of the Lord is sure*, Psal. xix. 7. That God's declaring a thing to be true or good, is a sufficient proof of its being so, separate from any other argument. Now for those truths, of which reason can make some discovery, a Christian believes them also in the proper sense, if he finds them in the word of God. Yea he mainly walks by faith for most of these; because he finds them set in a fuller and more satisfying light in Scripture, than they could be by bare unassisted reason. And other truths, of which he could know nothing but by Scripture, he believes upon the sole testimony of God, as far as he hath made them
known;

known; as well as those truths to which reason gives concurring evidence. Upon this foundation, spiritual objects appear real and substantial, though they come not within the notice of sense: an assent is given to the most sublime and mysterious doctrines, as far as he can discern God's testimony, though reason cannot account for them: past transactions, which God hath recorded for our use, are made present to the mind, and influential according to their nature and end: the most distant objects are brought down to the heart and affections: and the things which are to be hereafter, are confidently expected. *Faith is the substance, or the confident expectation, of things hoped for, Heb. xi. 1.*

II. I am to shew the fitness of faith to have a most powerful and commanding influence upon the whole of the christian temper and life: to be the principal of our *walk*.

1. The *objects* of faith are admirably suited to have the most universal influence; as they are things of the greatest importance and suitability to us. Every part of divine revelation tends one way or other to promote practical godliness. All the discoveries made therein of God himself, either point out to us a subject of direct imitation, or some correspondent temper or duty, which is truly perfective of our natures. The precepts it contains are holy, just, and good; and taken together, are *exceeding*

ing broad, sufficient for our direction in every relation and circumstance of life. The motives it proposes, are of the largest extent; fit to strike upon all the springs of human action; to move gratitude, to animate hope, to awaken fear, to impress a sense of duty. And these motives in every kind are of the greatest weight and moment in themselves. The highest and most undoubted authority prescribes our duty, the one supreme law-giver. The most endearing engagements are proposed to our gratitude. We are persuaded *by the* infinite and innumerable *mercies of God*, in creation, providence and redemption. The most *exceeding great and precious promises* are set in our view for both worlds, to encourage our obedience; while the ways of sin are fenced up with the most awful and terrible threatenings. So that it may very justly be apprehended, that *if men bear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*, Luke xvi. 31.

2. The reason of faith is very strong and forcible, the testimony of God. We are often greatly and justly influenced by the testimony of credible men: but *if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater*, infinitely greater, 1 John v. 9. All men, who believe a God, agree in this principle, that what he says must be true, because he is *a God that cannot lie*. And if there is
sufficient

sufficient and satisfactory evidence, indeed all that can reasonably be desired, that the Scriptures are the word of God; a persuasion so founded will bring the truths of the Gospel with full power upon conscience. Some of the objects of faith, as the everlasting recompences of another life, are of that vast moment to us, that if there was no more than a probability, or even a possibility of their truth, they ought in reason to determine our course on the safest side: but what force and weight are they fit to have, when considered as made certain by revelation? when we look upon eternal life, as *the promise which God hath promised us?* and *the wrath of God, as revealed from heaven against all sin and unrighteousness of men?* What a means of establishment may it be in an hour of temptation, to be able immediately to turn our thoughts to an *it is written*, that such a practice is undoubtedly sinful, that it will exclude from the kingdom of heaven? This is a weapon at hand in the greatest exigence, in the most sudden assault, when a man hath not time or inclination for a long and laboured train of thoughts.

3. The *institution* of faith to be the main principle of the divine life, makes it especially successful for that purpose. What hath been hitherto said, shews its aptitude in its own nature; that the wisdom of God, in this as in other cases, usually chuses proper means to serve the ends he intends by them. But his blessing

blessing is necessary to success: and accordingly we have the encouragement of his appointment in this case. He hath prescribed faith as the principle of vital religion; as the means of *purifying our hearts*, Acts xv. 9. of *resisting the devil*, 1 Pet. v. 9. and of *overcoming the world*, 1 John v. 4. as the foundation, upon which every other grace and virtue are to be built; they are to be *added to it*, 2 Pet. i. 5. By this we abide in Christ, and derive *grace out of his fulness* for our constant supply: and in the exercise of it may expect the continued influences of the Spirit according to all the occasions of the christian life. For these two stand connected together in God's saving design, 2 *Thess.* ii. 13. *He hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.* It is God's constitution, that *the just shall live by faith*, Heb. x. 38. that the beginning and progress of his spiritual life shall be under the sway of this principle; and that all, which is to be expected from God to maintain and cultivate it, is to be obtained in the way of believing.

The *Application* I would make of this subject, shall be in three general exhortations from it.

1. We should be concerned to see that we are possessed of such a faith, as is fit to be an effectual principle of the christian temper
 and

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and life. All faith will not be so. But to
this purpose,

Let us be very careful, that what we believe hath a foundation in the word of God : that we take not up with the mere imaginations of our own minds, or the mere dictates of men, for objects of faith. Erroneous persuasions, as far as they are entertained, and by how much the firmer the persuasion is, are the more likely to have a bad influence upon the spiritual life. Or if men should be preserved in a good measure from their bad practical tendency ; yet if afterwards the falshood of them comes to be discerned, this too often proves an occasion of shaking mens faith in truths which are better grounded. Which shews of what consequence it is, that we search the Scriptures diligently, and bring our sentiments to the test by them, that we may be able to see our foundation there.

Let it be our endeavour to extend our faith in what God hath revealed, as far as we can. That our faith take as wide a compass as may be, and that we gain more clear and distinct apprehensions of divine truths. All the discoveries made in the word of God, are one way or other subservient to practice ; either for direction, or encouragement, or admonition ; though all are not equally useful : and in some or other circumstance of life, we shall find the serviceableness of every object of faith. Therefore we should carefully study the rule of faith ;
and

and by that means, joined with prayer to God, pursue the same aim for ourselves, which the apostle had so much at heart for the *Thessalonians*, to *perfect that which is lacking in our faith*, 1 *Theff.* iii. 10.

Let it be our daily concern and prayer, to have a more full and lively persuasion of those truths with which we are acquainted. Though we should be concerned to grow in the *extent* of our faith, because nothing which God hath seen fit to reveal, is without its use one way or another, at one time or another, in the christian life: yet I take it to be of more consequence of the two, to have our faith to grow *intensively*, tho' it should not take so wide a compass. He is the better scholar, and like to make more profitable use of his learning, who hath carefully and well digested a few books in comparison, than he that hath cursorily run over a far greater number: so a christian, of smaller attainments in knowledge, if he hath but a firm and lively faith in the fewer principles of religion with which his mind is furnished, will far exceed a more knowing christian, who gives but a weak assent to his larger store of divine truths. Above all things, therefore, labour to have an assurance of faith, as far as you go: to *receive the word with much assurance*, then it will be *in power*, 1 *Theff.* i. 5. To have a realizing, presentiating faith of the unseen things which God

reveals: that tho' it is a distinct way of perception both from sight and knowledge, yet it may come as near as may be in its proper province, to the strength of persuasion which they give in theirs.' Hence strong faith is sometimes expressed by *sight*: Moses *saw him that is invisible*, Heb. xi. 27. Abraham *saw Christ's day*, John viii. 56. We *behold the glory of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. And at other times by *knowledge*, John vi. 69. *We believe, and are sure, or know, that thou art the Christ.* 2 Cor. v. 1. *We know, that if our earthly house were dissolved, we have a building of God, &c.* 1 John iii. 2. *We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, i. e.* we firmly believe these things. We should be solicitous that *our faith* may thus *grow exceedingly*, 2 Theff. i. 3. and to that end, along with a continued search into the grounds of our faith, nothing is more necessary than earnest prayer; *I believe, Lord, help mine unbelief*, Mark ix. 24. Such a strong faith is fit to live by, and fit to die by.

2. Hereupon let it be our constant care to *walk by faith*. That is,

That faith be the prevailing principle which discriminates and governs our tempers and lives. Let us shew the world, by proper fruits, that we are not mainly swayed by the same things by which they are governed, neither by the impulse of appetite, nor by prevailing custom, nor by the authority of men,

nor

nor by worldly prospects, either of hope or fear : but that God's authority in his word is allowed principally to give law to us ; that we live by rule, as under God's eye now, and in view of a life to come.

That we reduce every object of our faith one way or other to practice. Every truth we entertain is useless, if it be not thus employed ; and therefore we should not content ourselves with the bare speculation of any of them, but consider what influence each of them hath upon practice : either for the immediate direction and regulation of it, or to dispose us to the performance of it : either as a motive to ingenuity, or a pattern for imitation ; or as representing the danger of neglecting our duty, or of acting contrary to it ; or as a foundation of hope of assistance or acceptance in our course of obedience. A right apprehension of the practical tendency of particular truths, will be a good preparation for the actual use of them, as there shall be occasion. And that is the next thing I would press, as included in this exhortation,

That in the various particular occasions of the christian life, we actually make use of the several objects of faith to their proper purposes, as *a word in season*. For instance,

(1.) Every known precept of God should be carefully reduced to practice, as occasions offer to make one or another our present duty. That is, to walk by our belief of his commands.

(2.) The perfections of God should severally be called to mind and considered by us, as each of them may be most suitable to our present case, to promote our conscientious and comfortable walking with God. In an hour of temptation from secrecy, we should especially recollect his all-seeing eye: *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9 In great distresses and troubles, it is peculiarly seasonable to think of his almighty power to support or to deliver us; and of his infinite goodness and compassion, which assures us that he doth not willingly afflict, that he hath gracious ends in his corrections, and that, if we trust in him, and keep his way, he will not suffer them to be insupportable either in degree or continuance. When we are injuriously treated by men, we would turn our thoughts to his justice; that he righteously punishes us, how much soever men may be blame-worthy, as *David* reflected in the case of *Shimei*; and that he will right us in his own time, as far is necessary: and to his goodness; how much *better it is to fall into the hands of God than of men*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Are we in pressing dangers? his power and wisdom should be our relief, as they were *Jehoshaphat's*, 2 Chron. xx. 6. *In thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?* And ver. 12. *We know not what to do, but our eyes are up unto thee.* Under the penitent

tent sense of sin, his infinite mercy is our refuge. *With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption*, Psal. cxxx. 7. Aye, and his justice and faithfulness in Christ. 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

(3.) His providence should be ey'd and owned according to our circumstances from time to time. Praise and thanksgiving should be kept alive by the believing view of his gracious hand in all our mercies: and every one of them should be represented to our minds, as an engagement to chearful obedience; that as they are *new every morning, and fresh every moment*, there should ever be a new and fresh zeal and fervor in our grateful returns. Our afflictions and exercises should not be past over, as if they *arose out of the dust*; but God's hand should be acknowledged, and his end attended to in them, and faithfully answered in them, as far as it can be discovered. His sovereign pleasure is patiently to be submitted to. In any desires and hopes we entertain of present good things, there should be mixed with them a resignation to his holy will; *if the Lord will*. And in every difficulty and distress of life, our trust should be in his all-sufficiency, and our cares cast upon him. This is walking by faith in God's providence.

(4.) His promises should be suitably applied for our encouragement thro' our course.

These should have a prevailing influence upon us beyond all temporal motives; and, in case of a competition with such motives, be allowed to carry the day. And the promises particularly suitable to our present case, ought to be called to mind from time to time, and lived upon: the promises of divine conduct, in the sense of the weakness of our understanding and judgment: of strength, when we think of our inability for service or suffering: of grace answerable to our day and work, when we are called out to hard services: of proper supplies, when we are in outward burdens and wants: of acceptance and pardon upon our sincerity, when we are proceeding in our way, and yet cannot but be sensible of our imperfections: and of grace to enable us to persevere, while we are endeavouring it, and yet think of the oppositions in our way. Hereby we shall make the proper use of God's promises, according to God's intention in delivering them, and our own occasion for the relief they contain. The worth and excellence of the promises, should also excite our care to have the terms of them fulfilled in us: and those of *grace and glory*, as the greatest and the best, should have the main influence upon us. This is walking by faith in the promises.

(5.) The terrors of the Lord should be represented to our minds for our admonition and caution. They are left upon record, to keep
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keep saints awake, as well as to rouse sinners out of their lethargy: and we should attend to them, to quicken us when we are apt to be remiss; to excite our care and caution, lest after our possession and hopes, we should *at last be cast-aways*, 1 Cor. ix. 27. Or to recover us to repentance, when we have fallen: or to fortify us against compli-
ance in an hour of temptation.

(6.) Christ should be made use of, and applied to, in his several offices, thro' the whole course of the christian life, for the several purposes for which he is offered. We are to *live the life we live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God*, Gal. ii. 20. His doctrine and example should often be set in our view by faith, as our great teacher and pattern. Under the sense of our guilt and unworthiness, our reliance ought to be on the perfection of his sacrifice, and the prevalence of his intercession: and the acceptance of our persons and services is only to be expected for his sake. And we are to rely upon his grace, as our head, for constant supplies.

Another necessary exhortation from our present subject remains.

3. Let us persevere in walking by faith, till we arrive at sight. *Believing to the saving of the soul*, stands opposed to *drawing back*, which is declared to be *unto perdition*, Heb. x. 39. Faith comes short of sight; but if we are governed by it, it brings us every

day nearer to fight. And by how much the nearer we see the day approaching, so much the more should faith take wing, entering into that which is within the veil. If our hands hang down, when the shadows of the evening come upon us, our hope must sink too: and if we have any faith left, it must reproach us, that, when we are in a nearer view of *Canaan* than formerly, we flag, and suffer ourselves more to be carried away by sense. Let us not abate or decline in the life, which is animated by faith: but *knowing the time, let us awake out of sleep*, if we have suffered meaner principles to gain the ascendant over us: and if we are yet pressing forward with full sails towards the haven, let it be our care that we do not relax our zeal and application; but live as faith dictates, till the rewards of faith are obtained.

To inforce all this, it may be proper to consider, that—

A life of faith is highly reasonable. It is to govern ourselves by matters which are at once of the highest importance and reality; the greatest concerns we can have in view; with the testimony of God, to support and warrant our concern about them.

It is at present the most satisfactory and comfortable life. To have no view beyond sense, must ever make this world a howling wilderness: and we cannot have any satisfactory view of a future rest, by any other
light

light than that of faith. This therefore alone can minister to us the great solace of life. And besides that, to *live by rule* is a rest to the mind; which we shall most securely do, by living under the conduct of faith. And in all turns the divine perfections, providence and promises, are a fountain of peace and serenity, which cannot be equalled either by the most agreeable present enjoyments, or by the best prospects we can form on the measures of human policy.

To walk by faith, bears the nearest resemblance to the life of heaven; of any thing we can attain while we are probationers. A believer lives upon the same objects, as those above live upon in full happiness; the same God and Redeemer: only these objects are very differently perceived above and here. *Now we see them through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know, even as we are known,* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The Christian's portion is the same in both worlds; but now he hath it in title, and there will have it in possession: now he sees it afar off; then he will have it at hand, and in full enjoyment.

Whatever imperfection attends this life now, will soon be over and at an end. Tho' faith is not sight, yet it will very quickly be turned into sight. It is as sure a presage of the perfect light of heaven, as the morning-light is of the clear shining of noon-day.

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And this walk upon the foundation of believing, has been the walk of *the excellent of the earth* in every age of the world. As many of them as successively have arrived at glory, have *through faith and patience inherited the promises*, Heb. vi. 12. It is the design of the apostle in the whole *eleventh* chapter to the *Hebrews*, to shew that faith conducted the principal worthies of the *Old Testament* to all their commendable actions in life, and to the heavenly rewards at the end of it. And the apostle in the text declares, that this was the animating principle of himself and other servants of God, under the *New Testament*; so he had before observed, chap. iv. 13. that *we have the same spirit of faith* with good men under the Mosaical dispensation. We have the same principle of faith to rule in us, which inspired them with all their excellencies: but we have fuller discoveries, to imploy and support our faith; and therefore should be stronger in it, and perform greater things under its influence.

S E R M O N VIII.

Godliness ; or, the Christian
Temper towards God.

2 P E T. i. 6. latter part of the verse.

— *And to patience, godliness.*

TH E christian spirit has been considered in several *general* representations : I would now enter upon the *particular* branches which constitute it ; and this of *godliness* naturally comes first to be treated of, or the religious regard we owe to the blessed God. The mention of this is so introduced in the words before us, that it will directly suit my design, which is to recommend it as a most important part of that temper, to which we are called by christianity.

The apostle had observed, *ver. 3.* what great and good things are conferred upon us by the divine power, even *all things that pertain unto life and godliness* ; meaning probably all things pertaining to a godly life : and
then

then in *ver. 4.* that we have *exceeding great and precious promises given us*, for this very end, *that by them we might be partakers of a divine or godlike nature.* In the following verses he presses those who professed christianity, to pursue this end; to exercise and cultivate the various graces of the christian life, *ver. 5. &c. καὶ αὐτὸ τέτο, and besides this;* or rather, as such benefits, such promises are given you for such an end; so do ye *also for this reason*, or *in like manner*, giving all diligence on your part, *add*, or join together as in a choir, the following excellencies, *Add to your faith*, to your inward persuasion of these good tidings of the Gospel, *virtue*, or boldness and resolution in maintaining faith and a good conscience. *And to virtue knowledge;* a gradual advance in the knowledge of the truths and duties of christianity, with which you are in some measure already acquainted. *And to knowledge, temperance;* in the moderate use of the good things of this present life. *And to temperance, patience;* in bearing cheerfully the evils of life. *And to patience, godliness;* such a regard to God, as will carry you through the whole of your course. Here we are now to stop, in the account which the apostle gives of this chain of graces.

Ἐυσέβεια, which in this place, as well as in many others, is translated *godliness*, most strictly signifies *right worship* or *devotion*:
and

and on the other hand in some places it is taken so largely, as to import the whole of practical religion, or a disposition to universal goodness. But here I apprehend it is to be understood in a middle sense; neither to be confined to mere acts of worship; nor to be extended to the whole compass of our duty; but plainly to signify *such a temper and behaviour towards God, as becomes his excellencies, and our relations to him*; or more briefly, *a disposition to pay all proper regards to God.* It is often used in the same sense in other places of the New Testament. So it stands distinguished from *honesty*, when the apostle sums up a good life in this, *to live in all godliness and honesty*, 1 Tim. ii. 2. And *the grace of God* is said to *teach us to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. Where *sobriety* includes all our personal duties and self-government; *righteousness* all that we ought to do, as we stand related to our fellow-creatures; and *godliness* our inclination to all that which is more immediately due to God. And just in the same sense I understand it here. We are then to observe,

That godliness is a temper of mind, to which we are particularly called by christianity.

Upon which head I would shew, I. Wherein godliness or piety consists. II. The indispensable obligations under which Christians lie to this.

I. We are to enquire what are the regards due from us to the blessed God, or wherein the right temper of the soul towards God consists.

1. A *reverential fear of God* is an essential branch of godliness. This is so necessary a part of a good man's frame, that there is no single phrase more frequently made use of in Scripture to express religion in general, than the fear of God. It is a temper arising from an apprehension of his majesty and supreme excellence. *Shall not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you?* Job xiii. 11. From the infinite distance that there is between him and us; not only as he is *in heaven*, while *we are upon earth*; but as *all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity*, Isa. xl. 17. It is founded in his absolute superiority over us, and our entire dependence upon him; that there is none we have so much to hope or to fear from, as we stand upon good or ill terms with him; because he hath a sovereign and irresistible power over us, and over every thing that concerns us. And it results from those relations wherein we stand to him; which bespeak authority and rightful claims on his part, and profound submission and awe on ours. We should have such a regard to God, as a subject hath to his sovereign, a servant for

for his master, a child for his father. *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts, Mal. i. 6.* But, as the distance between God and us in all these relations, infinitely exceeds the distance that can be between any such relations upon earth; so our awe and reverence should proportionably be higher.

Upon such grounds as these, a reverential fear of God is due from all intelligent creatures. It was so from man in innocence; it is so from the highest angels in heaven; and will be the temper of holy men and holy angels to all eternity. In token of this, those above *fall before the throne on their faces, worshipping God, Rêv. vii. 11.* And so the *seraphims* are represented as *covering their faces with their feet, and saying one to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, Isa. vi. 2, 3.* They who know God most, and bear most of his likeness, and share most fully in his favour; have the profoundest reverence for him, arising from the sense of his infinite perfection, unparalleled glory, and sovereign dominion; while they are above all such fear as gives uneasiness and anxiety, for their *perfect love* prevents that. Those who sing the song of *Moses* and of the Lamb, express themselves as if they could hardly suppose it possible there should be any without this fear: *Great*
and

and marvellous, say they, are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art holy, Rev. xv. 3, 4. And if the saints and angels above reverence the glorious majesty in the heavens, certainly we should cultivate such a frame on earth. The apostle calls us to it upon the foot of the Gospel, Heb. xii. 28, 29. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which is set up upon the dissolution of the Jewish œconomy, and is to continue to the end of time; let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.* He is so represented even by the Gospel itself.

As we are sinners, our fear justly goes farther; from the holiness of his nature, the justice of his government, and the threatenings of his law. In such a state, we have room to apprehend the severe marks of his displeasure in time; and especially to *fear him*, as *able and ready to destroy both soul and body in hell*, Mat. x. 28.

We are relieved indeed against these fears by the grace of the Gospel, and the mediation of Christ; so that the greatest of sinners ought not so to dread the wrath of an offended God, as to despair of his mercy upon repentance: But still as long as they remain in
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their sins, they ought to represent to their minds the terrors of the Lord; as well as the riches of his grace, to excite them to return to their Father. The Gospel, along with the good tidings it brings, makes a fuller representation than ever was made before, of the severity of God's wrath against sinners: *The wrath of God is there revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men*, Rom. i. 18. And a sorer punishment is threatned in many places to those who reject the Gospel; than to other sinners, *John* iii. 19. *Mat.* xi. 24. *Heb.* x. 28, 29. Surely this is done to awaken answerable fears in the minds of sinners. And no man can upon good reason get above such fears, farther than he hath evidence of his own sincere return to God. For good men themselves, while the divine nature in them is so very imperfect, it may be expected, that the generality of them will have a mixture of hope and fear about their own sincerity; and this mixture can hardly fail to produce some fears of God's wrath, along with their hopes of his mercy in Christ. And indeed the Scripture represents it as useful for the best men in this life to entertain some apprehensions of their own apostacy, and, upon that supposition, of their final ruin. *St. Paul* tells us in his own case, that he kept his body in subjection, lest after his preaching to others, he himself should be a cast-away, 1 Cor. ix. 27. And it is his ad-

vice to Christians in general, *Heb. iv. 1. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* One eminent way whereby he who hath begun a good work in us, performeth it to the day of Christ, is by keeping alive an apprehension of the danger of apostacy, and so awakening our constant diligence and caution in our duty. But there will be no occasion for this in heaven; no fear, but that which is reverential, will follow us thither.

2. A *supreme love to God* is another eminent branch of godliness. This is of such importance, that Christ sums up all the first table in it, *Matt. xxii. 37, 38. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.* This supposes an apprehension of God as most amiable and good; for we love any thing under that notion: and God deserves our highest love, as being supremely good. He is *in himself* most excellent, fit to be *our* chief happiness, and hath actually shewn himself our best friend; upon all which accounts our supreme love is due to him.

(1.) There should be the highest esteem and veneration for God, as he is in himself possessed of all possible excellencies. We feel ourselves ready to esteem real worth, when

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we see it, even though we are not ourselves direct gainers by it : we should justly blame ourselves, if we did not secretly value a man of steady virtue, a publick benefactor, a wise and a good prince, though we are not like to be the better for him ourselves, and have no knowledge of him but by fame or history. And if we love and esteem a worthy man, shall we not have the highest veneration for that blessed being who *is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all?* 1 John i. 5. in whom all excellencies meet together, which can any where be found scattered among creatures ; and who possesseth them all in the most perfect manner, without any mixture or alloy, and without a possibility of losing them. His goodness and excellency tarnishes all the beauty and excellence of creatures ; because he is good in such a sense as none can be acknowledged good besides. *There is none good but one, that is God,* Mat. xix. 17. He alone is perfectly, originally, necessarily and unchangeably good. He has every excellence in the highest degree ; almighty power, unerring wisdom, infinite goodness, unblemished truth ; spotless holiness ; every thing fit to raise the wonder, and engage the delight of an intelligent being. His glory shines out in the works of creation and providence, and so is laid open to every eye : and in the dispensation of grace it is farther manifested to us so, *as eye*

had not seen before, nor ear heard, nor had entred into the heart of man. We love God then, when we entertain high and admiring thoughts of him, according to these discoveries which he hath made of himself: when we venerate him as the most perfect being; and give him the glory of his several excellencies, as we turn our thoughts either to the works of nature, or to the wonders of grace, or the prospects of glory. This love of God for his own perfection, tho' it is not ordinarily the first act of love to be discerned in a recovered sinner; yet is indeed the greatest and the most noble of all others: the new nature disposes to it, and will certainly rise to it; if not at first, yet in its consequent acts: it may sometimes be discerned in good men, even while they are in doubt about their own interest in God; they yet esteem and value him, and are careful to speak well of him. This for certain will be the main temper of heaven, where *the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sits on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created,* Rev. iv. 10, 11.

-(2.) There should be a supreme affection for God, as the most suitable good to us.
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Tho' a mind rightly disposed will esteem real excellence, even where there is no apprehension of self-interest; yet doubtless it gives new life to affection, when we can consider such excellence, as some way or other conducing to our own happiness: and by how much the more completely an object is suited to our interest and advantage, so much the more will our hearts be united to it. Accordingly love to God includes this, that we centre in him as *our chief good*: that we are of the Psalmist's temper, *Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I can desire besides thee.* When any thing is judged a suitable good to us, love will act differently, according as that good is apprehended either to be yet only attainable, or as in actual possession. And so here,

Love to God expresses itself in strong *desires* of his favour, while an interest in him is doubtful, or the contrary feared. Such a soul will say, I see that God alone can be a satisfying portion to me: in his favour is my life; without that, tho' I had all the world, I should still be destitute and miserable. This engages to earnest desires, that he may have God for his reconciled God and Father, and that he may share in his pardoning mercy and covenant-love. He is content to part with all for this, rather than miss of it, and it is his resolved aim and business, to secure this more than any thing else. He can say with,

David, Psal. cxix. 58. I intreated thy favour with my whole heart. Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, Psal. iv. 6. He cannot be easy, while a cloud remains upon his father's face : it is as death to him to apprehend him displeased ; nor can he be satisfied, till he is reconciled. He cries with earnestness like David, in Psal. li. 11, 12. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

On the other hand, love to God acts in a way of *delight*, as far as a man can hope that he may call God his. He can be at rest in God, when he has such views of him ; and rejoices in divine favour, more than if he could call the whole world his. Nothing animates his praises more, than that God has inclined him to center in such a portion, *Psal. xvi. 5, 6, 7. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup : thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel ;* this counsel, to fix upon so good a portion. In this he can rejoice in the darkest hours for outward things : *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd*

herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation, Hab. iii. 17, 18. Nothing is so delightful to him in the view of heaven itself, as that he shall be there in the blissful presence of God, and that *he shall be satisfied, when he awakes with his likeness.*

And indeed, either of these are true expressions of love to God; desires of him under doubts of reconciliation, and delight in the sense of his favour. But it is more usually expressed in the former way by good men in this life. Few Christians here are got intirely above all doubts about their state: through the darknes of their apprehensions, and infirmity of their faith, or the disorders of a melancholy body; and especially from the imperfection of the new nature, and the defects of their obedience. The love of most Christians to their God shews itself more now, in desires to make their peace with him, and to clear up their interest, and in mourning for their offences and his displeasure, than in the acts of delight and joy.

(3.) There ought to be the affection of *gratitude* from the sense of God's actual benignity and love to us. In esteeming him for his own excellency, we love him for his own sake: in centring in him as a suitable good to us, we love him for our sakes: but in gratitude for his benignity and love, there is a mixture of both. His love to us affects

us from a sense of our own interests, and that sets us upon thoughts of becoming returns. This love is the acting of ingenuity from the sense of benefits. It is like the filial love of an ingenuous child to a tender and indulgent parent, upon a review of his care and kindness, in preserving him, providing for him, doing him all the good that lay in his power: which engages him to study to requite his parents in the best manner he can. Such love to God there is in a holy soul. All the expressions of God's good-will to him; all his mercies in the sphere of nature, grace and glory; as they are the greatest that can be, so they fix this for the sense of his soul, that God is his great benefactor: and *he will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with him*, Psal. viii. 6. It is his solicitous inquiry, *What shall I render?* Psal. cxvi. 12. From a principle of gratitude, as well as of interest, he renders himself to God. He repels temptation with this powerful thought, *How shall I do this evil, and sin against God?* And his course of obedience is designed to be a thankful memorial.

3. *Trust in God*, is another eminent part of godliness. It is an homage due from us to the great God, that we place our supreme confidence in him. It is founded in a persuasion of his all-sufficiency, and of his inviolable faithfulness in performing his word and engagements. As far as I trust a man, I suppose

pose him able to do what I trust him for, that he hath given me some encouragement to believe his willingness, and that he will not deceive me. It must be so in any regular trust in God. We must be firmly persuaded of his all-sufficiency, that he is *able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*. But then it is of the utmost concern to us, that we admit not expectations from God for things which he hath never promised, nor in any other way than according to the tenor of his promises; but that we *hope in his word*, Psal. cxxx. 5. Our trust should run parallel with his promises. Where he has been pleased positively to declare what he will do, we should firmly depend, believing that *he is faithful who has promised*, whatever difficulties or discouragements may lie in the way of our hopes. Thus we should *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator*, 1 Pet. iv. 19. relying upon a good event and issue, while we maintain such a course, whatever we may be called to do or suffer; because on such terms he hath undertaken for it. But where his promises are made with a reserve for his own sovereignty, or the reaches of his superior wisdom, as he knows far better than we *what is good for man in this life*; there we should not allow ourselves to be positive and determinate in our expectations of particular events, but *cast our cares upon him* in a more general

general manner; relying upon this, that in the way of duty, he will do that which upon the whole is best for us; or that *he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

4. *Giving credit to his testimony* in all that he reveals for truth, is near akin to the former; and a proper homage to God upon the foot of his infallible truth, that he neither can be mistaken himself, nor is under any temptation to deceive us. Whatever he says, must be true, and accordingly claims our firm assent, though we should have no other evidence for it besides his testimony; though we should not be able to account for the manner of it, or to solve every difficulty that may arise in the mind against it. We should indeed be very careful, that we have the testimony of God to support our persuasion, that we have used the best means in our power, both natural and appointed, to understand his meaning: when we have done this, it is an essential branch of true godliness to believe upon the sole authority of God; in so doing, we *set to our seal, that God is true*, John iii. 33.

5. *A readiness to obey him without reserve*, in all that he requires, is a principal part of piety: that we are brought to such a disposition as *Saul's* at his conversion, when he said, *What wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. That we are sincerely desirous to discover his will for every part of our duty, and then absolutely

solutely to govern ourselves by it; though it should be ever so contrary to our former inclinations and practices, or to the custom of the world about us, or to our secular interests. This is true christian piety, to resolve upon chearful and universal obedience to the divine will, as far as we can discern it; and it is a frame of spirit resulting from an apprehension of his perfect wisdom, justice and goodness, and his sovereign authority over us.

6. *A submission of soul to all his providential disposals*, is another branch of godliness, and founded upon a belief of the same perfections of God as the former: that we not only assent to this as a truth, that our times, and all our affairs, are in his hands; but that we give a hearty complacential consent, that so they should be: and accordingly from time to time, through all particular events, acquiesce in his pleasure, when it is signified to us by the course of his providence; without murmuring complaints, because he is the sovereign Lord of all: *Who shall say unto him, what dost thou? Shall he not do what he will with his own?* without impeaching the justice of his proceedings; for *shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* With a firm persuasion of his good and gracious intentions even in the use of his rod, being *in subjection* to him, as *to the father of our spirits*, who chastens us not merely upon will and pleasure, but *for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holi-*

holiness, Heb. xii. 9, 10. And with a persuasion at the same time, that his infinite wisdom can direct the darkeſt diſpenſations to reach ſuch gracious deſigns : that he ſees not as man ſees, and his ways are not as our ways ; but that he can make thoſe things ſignally to work together for our good, which from their ſenſible aſpect ſeem *all againſt us*. A great deal of true piety lies in ſuch a placid ſubjection of ſoul to God.

7. *Deſigning his glory* as the great ſcope of our actions. This ariſes from an apprehenſion of his fitness to be made the laſt end of intelligent creatures, by reaſon of his ſupreme excellence and dominion. *Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, we ſhould do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. We ſhould chuſe to do or forbear a thing, which may otherwiſe be indifferent, according as in particular circumſtances the one or the other may appear moſt likely to promote his honour, and to lead others about us to high and honourable thoughts of God and religion : and we ſhould make every lower aim to give place to this as our laſt and greateſt. Such a temper of mind is eſſential to vital chriſtianity. *None of us [Chriſtians] ſays the apoſtle, liveth to himſelf, and no man dieth to himſelf. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord : and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's*, Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

8. *A studious concern to approve ourselves to him* in our whole conduct, is a necessary ingredient of true godliness. That we *study to shew ourselves approved to him*, 2 Tim. ii. 15. And *whatever we do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men*, Col. iii. 23. This is a temper resulting from the consideration of God, as the Being *with whom* principally we have to do; by whose sentence not only our present lot must be ordered, but our condition to all eternity. Hence the apostle says, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. *With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not my own self, i. e. not with an apprehension that my own judgment is definitive; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* We should be concerned for his approbation in all things, because he is a constant spectator of our actions, and of our very hearts themselves. It should be a frequent turn of thought with us, *Thou, God, seest me; thou understandest my thoughts afar off; there is not a word in my tongue, but thou knowest it altogether*: And therefore we should *set the Lord always before us*, Psal. xvi. 8.

9. *A care to imitate him*, as far as he proposes himself to our imitation, enters into the notion of godliness. Which is a regard we owe to God upon account of his supreme excellence, because we cannot copy after a better pattern. It was the original glory of our natures,

tures, to be made after the image of God ; and therefore the more we recover his likeness again, the more we come back to ourselves. But I inlarge not on this here, since an entire discourse hath been employed upon it.

10. *A disposition to serve God in spirit and in truth*, in all the ways of his instituted worship, is farther included in a godly temper ; an inclination and bent of soul to the proper exercises of godliness, and to the performance of these in a godly manner. Prayer, and praise, and the confession of sin, reading and hearing God's word, and the celebration of the sacraments, are services wherein he requires us to be employed ; by social worship to pay him a visible homage ; and both in publick and private devotions to exercise the several inward pious dispositions, of which I have been speaking, fear, and love, and trust, and submission. In these we are to draw near to God, and then may expect him to draw near to us. Godliness will engage us to *walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless*, Luke i. 6. and to *love the habitation of his house*, and all the exercises wherein he appoints us to honour him, and allows us to converse with him. But then piety will not suffer us to rest in the mere external services, but will make us especially careful of the inward part, that they be truly spiritual sacrifices in which our spirits are intently engaged, pious and devout affections offered up ; and that

that they may be *acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5.

These particulars will explain that branch of the christian temper which is strictly called *godliness*. The special obligations of Christians to it, will be the subject of another discourse.

I would only now desire you to examine yourselves upon this first and leading head of all true goodness, your temper toward God. Do you *live without God in the world?* or without paying a supreme regard to him? Or else, though you are obliged to reside at present in a sensible world, and to converse with sensible things, do you chiefly *eye him who is invisible?* Do you *walk with God?* as the character of a truly good man is sometimes drawn in scripture. Can you say with *David*, *Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord?* Psal. xxv. 15. That you *walk in his fear all the day long?* That *your hearts are directed into the love of God?* That you *trust in him at all times?* That you can take his word in any case? That you are willing to obey him without exception, and to submit to him without a murmur? That his honour and approbation are the scope you propose to yourselves? That you would gladly be as like him, as he allows you to be? That a day in his courts, or an hour spent in converse with him, is better than a thousand elsewhere? That you cannot content yourselves with appearing to
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men to perform religious duties in an unexceptionable manner, unless you can have hope, that the God who sees in secret will approve you openly? This is real godliness, that to which christianity was designed to recover us. Such worshippers God desireth; and if this be our temper, it is a good preface whither we are going, even to a world where *God shall be all in all*; where the highest regards will be paid him by all the inhabitants, but after the manner of that perfect state, and freed from all the imperfections of ours.

S E R M O N IX.

Godliness ; or, the Christian Temper towards God.

2 P E T. i. 6. latter part of the verse.

— *And to patience, godliness.*

IN the last discourse the nature of godliness, in the most strict sense of the word, was considered ; or the right temper of the soul toward God. I am now in the second place to shew—

II. The obligations which lie upon Christians to exercise themselves unto godliness ; or to maintain and exercise a constant pious regard to God.

I. This is one principal end of the gospel: As the bias of innocent nature was in the first place to the performance of that duty which is owing to God ; so any designs of man's recovery from the apostacy, could not fail to take in this as a principal part, his re-

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storation to godliness. The sin and the misery too, from which above all things we needed relief, was our alienation from God. It was impossible for the rational nature to be set right, and yet remain disaffected to God: When therefore he set a saving design on foot, this must be his first intention and scope, to bring man back to his due affection and allegiance to his own blessed self, and to have the mind of man cured of all hostility and unsuitableness of temper towards the God that made him. For this end *Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. We were gone off from him, prone to live without him, unmindful of the relations and obligations wherein we stood to him, and destitute of impressions and affections correspondent to his perfections, and to the concern we have with him. Now the great intention of the blessed Jesus, in submitting to suffer for us, was to atone for this horrid provocation, to procure the divine Spirit to renew us, and to encourage and dispose us by all to *arise and return to our Father*. The goodwill of God to us, his readiness to receive us upon our return, his gracious intentions for those who do return, are all manifested in the Gospel for this very purpose, to revive godliness in creatures who had lost it. We are allowed to know, that *there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared*, Pſal.

cxxx. 4. that he may be religiously feared again by apostate creatures. *The grace of God, bringing salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us on the one hand to deny all ungodliness, and on the other to live godly in this world,* Tit. ii. 11, 12. that is, to live in the exercise of the fear and love of God, and of all those holy dispositions towards him, wherein godliness consists. The whole Gospel is *a doctrine according to godliness,* 1 Tim. vi. 3. and tending to form that temper in us. All the truths it reveals, the precepts it contains, and the promises and threatnings with which they are enforced, have this for their chief scope and aim, to recal us to live to God.

2. All other seeming virtues, without godliness, can never be acceptable to God; and then they will be of little service to us. It will be a poor reward of them, to secure thereby a fair character among men, or to obtain the highest ends which can be served by them in this short and momentary life; if they will turn to no good account in the future world: if our judge after all shall give us our portion with hypocrites, and rank us among the workers of iniquity. And he will certainly do so, if true *godliness* be wanting, whatever splendid appearances may be in our character: and that upon *two* accounts.

Because of the partiality of such seeming goodness. While regard appears to be paid

to some parts of duty, a most important part to God himself is neglected. *He that keeps the whole law, and offends in one point, is guilty of all*; says St. James, chap. ii. 10. Tho' a man should observe many points of his duty, and yet statedly and allowedly neglect others, which are equally plain and obvious; this cannot be a genuine or acceptable obedience. What he attends to and performs, tho' in fact it his duty, yet he cannot be supposed to do it merely for that reason; otherwise he would mind the other branches of his duty also. Thus, let men be ever so sober and regular in the conduct of themselves, let their behaviour be ever so unexceptionable to their fellow-creatures; yet, if they *remember not their creator*, if they live *without God in the world*, their goodness is all partial, and therefore insincere. Can you think that the great God will dispense with the neglect and contempt of himself, because people maintain a decency in their behaviour to their fellow-creatures? If he will not accept him, who *breaks* [with a stated allowance] *one of the least of his commandments*, Mat. v. 19. shall any one flatter himself, that he will overlook the open contempt of *the first and great commandment*, the fear, and love and service of himself? You value yourselves, it may be, upon doing no body wrong; but *will you rob God*, and yet hope to be guiltless? Your first and greatest regards are due to him; your obli-

obligations to these are written in nature and Scripture, as with the point of a diamond. And therefore *in any nation*, especially in a christian one, *he that feareth not God*, whatever *righteousness* he seemeth to *work*, is not *accepted with him*. This is farther evident,

Because there is no religion in any appearances of goodness, farther than they proceed from a regard to God as the principle of them. The regularity and usefulness of mens outward actions is all that can recommend them to other men, because they are not capable judges of the springs and principles that animate them: But *God sees not as man sees*; he judges not according to outward appearance, but mainly regards the temper of mind from which mens actions flow, and particularly the respect they have to himself in all they do; and he proceeds by that measure in his acceptance. We are required to *do, whatever we do, as unto the Lord, and not as unto men*, Col. iii. 23. Now when we restrain our appetites and passions; when we are just and meek, and charitable and beneficent to others, out of a respect to God, in obedience to his will, in imitation of his example, with an eye to his glory; this consecrates every moral duty, and makes it truly an act of religion, so that it is *good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*, 1 Tim. ii. 3. But if godliness be not the foundation and principle of such actions, they

are but the body without the soul: when God comes to pass his judgment on them, he may say, *Did ye these things at all unto me?* You did them out of humour, or to be seen of men, or to serve some worldly aim; and then *verily you have your reward:* expect no reward *from me*, since you did them not *to me*.

3. Godliness is a necessary foundation of all the other branches of the christian temper, and the only principle which can carry it through. Therefore we find *the fear of God* so often made use of in Scripture to express the whole of religion and godliness; and it is said to be *the beginning of wisdom*, Prov. ix. 10. Hence, as the whole chain of graces and duties enters into the character of a true Christian, so he is under the strongest obligations to cultivate a right temper of mind towards God, as the necessary principle of all the rest. And that it is such a principle, may appear from several considerations.

A sincere regard to God, and that only, will engage us to make conscience of every christian duty. Other motives may sway in particular instances; but nothing will be sufficient to carry us thro' the whole of the christian life, besides religion, properly so called. A submission to God's authority, an aim at his glory, a belief of his eye upon us, an expectation of his judgment, a sense of his love to us, and a strong affection to him

him in our souls thereupon, will have a vital influence upon every part of duty. If we go upon this ground, *of esteeming all his precepts concerning all things to be right, as David did, Psal. cxix. 128.* that will carry us through the whole compass of duty; for *his commandment is exceeding broad,* and reaches to every case, wherein we can be concerned to act. A supreme regard to God's honour, will engage us to be of this temper, that *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, or honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, we shall think on these things, Phil. iv. 8.* An apprehension of his constant observation, will quicken our endeavours, will reach to every place, and frame, and duty; and animate us to perform it in the best manner we can. And *the love of God ruling in us, will make us to esteem none of his commandments grievous, 1 John v. 3.* We shall run the way of his precepts with alacrity, with speed, *hasting, and not delaying to keep them, when our heart is so enlarged, Psal. cxix. 32.*

A respect to God, and that only, will effectually obviate all the discouragements and temptations which lie in the way of our duty. Whatever care and caution men may be

led to use, when they are seen by other men ; an agreeable temptation to sin, back'd with the circumstance of secrecy, will hardly be overcome without an eye to the invisible God. This secured *Joseph* in all his youthful prime, against the criminal and repeated solicitations of his mistress, tho' he might have expected considerable advantages from her favour and interest upon a compliance : yet, says he, *how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. When a duty is unfashionable, and will rather procure contempt than reputation ; what, beside a religious respect to God's authority and approbation, can make a man *stedfast and unmoveable* in it ? But when godliness has the ascendant, a man will judge a general esteem among men of little weight, when set in balance with the judgment of God. This thought, that *that which is highly esteemed among men, is often abomination in the sight of God*, Luke xvi. 15. will suspend a good man's regard for their judgment, till he has searched into the mind of God ; and when once he is satisfied what God would have him to do, he will be content to pass *thro' honour or dishonour, thro' good report, or bad report*, in obedience to God. Ungrateful returns for what was well meant, for good offices done, will soon dishearten and cool the zeal of those who act upon a lower principle than the fear of God ; while a devoted soul will go on in his way,
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and be fully satisfied with the prospect of God's approbation and gracious reward. But the force of this principle will appear especially in such cases, where our duty may expose us to danger and sufferings, to the loss of outward enjoyments, of friends, of estate, of liberty, of life itself. He that fears and loves any thing more than God, will break with him upon such an occasion. But a man, whose profession is supported by true religion, will behave like the three *Jewish* youth, when they were sentenced by *Nebuchadnezzar* to the fiery furnace; *If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us:—But if not, be it known unto thee, that we will not serve thy Gods, Dan. iii. 17, 18.* He will trust God, either to preserve the comforts which are most threatened for God's sake, or to preserve his soul to his heavenly kingdom.

A regard to God alone will reach our inward temper in all we do: and that is of principal account with him, in reference to every grace and virtue. This principle alone will make us concerned to cultivate purity of heart, as well as of conversation; to suppress malice, and hatred, and envy in our breasts, as well as the outward expressions of them; to guard against *the thought of foolishness.* An eye to God as *the searcher of hearts, as desiring truth in the inward parts,* will induce a man to look principally to the disposition of the heart, but a fair outside will serve a man, who lives without God in the world. 4. A

4. A godly temper is eminently recommended to Christians by the example of their Lord and Master. The man Christ Jesus was the greatest pattern of genuine piety that ever was shewn to the world. And in this respect, as well as others, *the same mind should be in us, as was in Christ.*

The blessed Jesus ever shewed through his whole course the most deep and fixed *sense of God* upon his mind. It never was true of any in such an eminent degree as it was of him, that he *was in the fear of the Lord all the day long.* All his actions, all his motions, the minutest steps of life, bespoke an eye directed to God.

He testified his *love* to his Father in the most expensive instances. This was a principle of his obedience unto death, even superior to his love to mankind. When he knew the time of his sufferings was just at hand, instead of endeavouring to evade them, he hastens into the fatal garden, that he might testify his affection to his Father and his interests. *That the world may know* (says he) *that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do; arise, let us go hence,* John xiv. 31. let us quit this place, and go into the garden, where the scene of my agonies is to begin.

His *trust* in God was very conspicuous thro' his course. This made him unconcerned in all the dangers of his life. When his disciples

disciples expostulated with him about his intention of returning into *Judea*, because the *Jews* there had so lately sought to stone him; Jesus answered, *John xi. 9, 10. Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world: but if a man walketh in the night, he stumbleth.* The meaning of which I take to be this: “The day in the
“ course of nature is a safe time for business;
“ a man is in no great danger of falling,
“ while he has the advantage of day-light:
“ so while my appointed day for the exer-
“ cise of my ministry lasts, in the course of
“ providence, I am not afraid of my ene-
“ mies, how malicious and watchful soever
“ they may be against me, While I have
“ work to do, I am immortal.” When his last sufferings were actually approaching, and he foresaw that his disciples would all be scattered from him; yet he supported himself with the thought of his father’s presence, *John xvi. 32. Ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* When one of his disciples drew a sword in his defence; after he had expressed his dislike of that action in his circumstances, he declares his full confidence of his Father’s readiness to assist him, if there was occasion, *Mat. xxvi. 54. Thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he, shall presently give*

give me more than twelve legions of angels? If those words of his upon the cross should appear to intimate some distrust, when he cries out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* it may be observed, that in the same breath he claims his interest in God; beginning his complaint with this, *My God, My God:* and since he applies himself to God at the time, as to one in whom he had a sure interest, I question whether we are to understand the complaint, as bespeaking his apprehension of any real desertion of his Father. He rather seems to complain of the great contempt and reproach cast upon him by his enemies, when they had just before insulted him, as if he was forsaken of God, because he was not rescued from the cross, *Mat. xxvii. 43. He trusted in God; let him deliver him, if he will have him. And the thieves, it is said, cast the same in his teeth,* ver. 44. Now in his cry, which follows in *ver. 46. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* his design seems to be to express the stedfast continuance of his trust in God; and at the same time to intimate, that he esteemed this one of the bitterest taunts which his enemies had thrown out upon him, that God should be thought to have abandoned him; and a very cutting part of his sufferings, that they should be made the occasion of such a thought. So that this is indeed an illustrious instance of his trust in God, when he was most derided for

for it. The same confidence in God he discovered to the last. When he was near his end, he was confident that he should be *that day in paradise*; and not only so, but also, that the dying thief who was converted to a surprizing faith in him, in his lowest condition, should be *with him* there, *Luke xxiii. 43.* And with his expiring breath he committed his departing soul to his Father: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*, ver. 46. How strongly is trust in God recommended to all his followers, by his fixed exercise of it through life down to death!

He was equally a pattern to us in *ready obedience* to his Father's will. Having undertaken to be his servant in the work of our redemption, he came into the world to do his will, *Heb. x. 7.* And when he was actually entered upon it, *it was his meat to do the will of him that sent him*, *John iv. 34.* He took more pleasure in any action of service to God, than in partaking of the necessary recruits of nature. The work assigned him was kept perpetually in his eye; and he reckoned a necessity to lie upon him to perform it, *John ix. 4. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day.* In the performance of that work, he exactly observed the instructions given him, in all that he spoke or did: whence he could say, *John viii. 28. I do nothing of myself.* And chap. xii. 50. *Whatsoever I speak, even as the Father said unto*

unto me, so I speak. He did not refuse the most difficult and self-denying services, but was *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, Phil. ii. 8. How would our obedience shine, if it were formed upon this model!

He cheerfully *submitted to divine disposal* in all circumstances of his condition. He had his eye to the providence of God, more than the hand of man, in his sufferings: so he tells *Pilate*, John xix. 11. *Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.* And to this disposal of God, he intirely submits. *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*, Mat. xxvi. 39. *The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

God's glory was his constant end. He sought not his own glory, John viii. 50. but *the glory of him that sent him*, John vii. 18. and therefore was content to undergo the lowest abasement, to advance the divine honour. Nothing awakened his zeal so much, as dishonour cast upon God, or that which belonged to him. *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*, John ii. 17. This was so uniformly his design, and the scope of all his life and actions, that he could solemnly appeal to his Father at the close of his work, chap. xvii. 4. *I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

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He was very exemplary in *the worship of God*, and in the observance of all the sacred institutions in force under that dispensation. He was careful to *fulfil all righteousness*, Mat. iii. 15. It appears from several passages of St. *John's* Gospel, that he used to attend the publick worship of the temple upon all proper occasions; and the worship of the synagogue every sabbath-day in the places where he came. *Luke* observes, chap. iv. 16. that, *as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day*; where the usual exercises of praying, and reading and expounding the word of God, were performed. And for secret prayer, we find him retiring for that purpose, where he might enjoy the greatest freedom, *Mat. xiv. 23*. Or rising up early for that exercise, *Mark i. 35*. And upon extraordinary occasions, carrying on his devotions to a great length; as once, *continuing all night in prayer to God*, *Luke vi. 12*. Or with peculiar earnestness, when he had special difficulties before him; as in his agony in the garden. And the Gospel-history sometimes takes notice of the outward marks of reverence he used; that he *kneeled*, *Luke xxii. 41*. that he *fell on his face*, *Mat. xxvi: 39*. that he *lift up his eyes to heaven*, *John xvii. 1*. which are recorded no doubt as exemplary indications of the reverence of his spirit. And for the other institutions then in use, they were all observed in his case. He
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was circumcised by his parents at the time appointed by the law, he submitted to be baptized by *John*, when he had an extraordinary commission to dispense that ordinance; and stately celebrated the passover. Without doubt, one intention of his performance of these things, and of their being recorded concerning him, was to dispose all his followers to a resemblance of the captain of their salvation in piety towards God.

And now to close this subject.

1. We may see one peculiar excellence of the christian religion, that it has the most direct tendency to promote godliness. It would be indeed an undeniable evidence that it had not a divine original, if it gave us an unworthy representation of the blessed God, or did not make a full provision for securing his rights and claims from mankind. But it is the glory of christianity, that it sets out God, his perfections, relations, and authority in the most clear and amiable view; and at the same time calls us by the most express precepts and the strongest motives to a becoming temper and practice.

2. Let us then who wear the christian name, make it our business to *live godly in Christ Jesus*. We find that phrase used in *2 Tim. iii. 12.* and it imports something peculiar in the godliness to be exercised by Christians.

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Let the respect we pay to God be agreeable to the revelation made of him by Christ. While *no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him*, John i. 18. and hath declared him in such a manner, as he was scarce manifested to the world before. Let our regards for him be correspondent to this discovery. Let them be spiritual, and not only bodily; as he is now more fully revealed in his spiritual nature, and requiring spiritual worshippers, *John* iv. 23, 24. He is now manifested, not only as our creator, but as at the head of a saving design, *reconciling an apostate world to himself in his Son*: Our homage therefore should be paid him, not as if we were innocent creatures; but as it becomes redeemed sinners, thro' a Mediator; honouring him in the way established by wise grace for lapsed creatures to have access to him. And yet as his grace and good-will are set in a clearer light than in any former dispensation, and as there is a more comfortable effusion of his Spirit, as *a Spirit of adoption*; our service to him should be, not with a slavish, but a childlike temper.

Let us animate ourselves in the practice by the great example of piety which Christ has given us. Looking unto Jesus, let us have grace to serve God acceptably; remembering that while in one nature he was himself *the true God*, yet, as man, he was the most godly man that ever was in the world.

Let us apply ourselves to the exercise of godliness, in a dependance on the grace and strength of Christ. If we are united to Christ as his living members, and partakers of his Holy Spirit, godliness will thrive under such blessed culture and influence; but *separate from him* as our head, *we* apostate creatures *can do nothing*, John xv. 5.

Let us expect God's favourable regard to the poor and imperfect respects we pay to him, only for the sake of Christ. As *our goodness*, on supposition it was perfect, *cannot extend to him* to profit him; so in the present imperfection of it, it could not please him, or be accepted by him, but in his beloved Son.

3. As godliness is profitable to all things, and peculiarly subserves the other duties of the christian life; so let the fruits of it appear in all the rest of a christian temper and practice. Let our faith be shewn by our works; our piety by our sobriety, and righteousness, and charity; and our love to God, whom we have not seen, by our love to our brother, whom we have seen. That superstructure the apostle calls us to add to godliness, in the words immediately following the text, *ver. 7. And to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity.*

S E R M O N X.

Faith in Christ.

I P E T. i. 8.

Whom, having not seen, ye love : in whom, tho' now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

NEXT to the regards we owe to God, the christian temper towards Christ, as the Saviour and Mediator, naturally comes under consideration. As the Saviour is himself God, that which hath been said already of the respect due to God, belongs to him in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost : but the Scripture leads us to another view of him as the Messiah and Mediator, and claims from us distinct practical regards to him as such. These are what I now propose to consider, for which the words read give us a proper foundation.

St. Peter wrote this epistle to *the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, &c.* ver. 1. *i. e.* to those of the *Jewish* nation who lived out of *Judea* in foreign parts, as many of them had done long before Christ's time; and who were already converted to the christian faith. Several churches were early planted in *Asia*, consisting chiefly of these *Jewish* converts. The apostle describes the nature of their change, whence it had its original, and how it was brought about, in ver. 2. and then expresses the happiness of it, offering a solemn thanksgiving to God upon that account, because they were new-born to the heavenly inheritance, and preserved by divine power in the way that led to possession, ver. 3, 4, 5. In this their happy state, he says, they could rejoice, even in the midst of various sufferings which attended them; for they knew that those sufferings were only trials of their faith, and upon their acquitting themselves well in the trial, would redound to their own, as well as to their master's *praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*, ver. 6, 7. Upon the mention of Christ's name, the apostle adds an elegant representation, how they stood affected to him: *Whom, having not seen, &c.* Wherein we may observe,

1. Their temper itself towards the Lord Jesus. They *believed* in him; that was fundamental to all the rest: and their *faith wrought*

wrought by love; they loved him, upon the sentiments they entertained concerning him with a faith unfeigned. And this faith and love produced a joy in him. The disposition of mind towards our blessed Lord, to which christianity calls us, may be summed up in these *three* things. But then we are to observe,

2. A circumstance of seeming disadvantage taken notice of in the case of these converts, beyond the case of some others. Some had *seen the Lord*; had had the advantage of being spectators of his life and miracles, of his death, and resurrection, and ascension into heaven, and had heard the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips. This was the privilege of *Peter* himself, and of the other disciples during Christ's abode below. But the Christians in the text had not had the same opportunity; they had not seen him, because he was withdrawn into heaven before they came to the knowledge of him or of his Gospel. Herein their circumstances were parallel to ours; the same with all those, who, after Christ's entrance into glory, are called to believe in him thro' the word of the Gospel.

I intend to discourse particularly of the three several branches of the disposition of Christians here mentioned; and shall keep in view this circumstance of his being unseen, in the consideration of each.

I. Faith in Christ is an essential branch of the christian temper, and necessary to be cultivated in us who see him not. This is the peculiar and the first call of the Gospel wherever it comes, next to a belief of the Gospel-revelation in general, that men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is made the grand term of our interest in the various blessings of grace and glory, which are offered to sinners: we have no encouragement given us to expect the acceptance of our persons or of any of our services without it; and we are directed to it, as the principle of the whole divine life. So the apostle tells us, *Gal. ii. 20. The life which I now live in the flesh (which in the verse before he says was a living unto God; this life) I live by the faith of the Son of God.* His whole life of godliness was influenced and animated by this: hence he derived his principal motives to it, and his main supports and encouragements under the difficulties attending it: hereby he was furnished with strength and grace sufficient for it: and by this means the whole was acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And of the same importance is faith in Christ to every one of us. Upon this therefore I would,

First, Give you a brief account of the nature of faith in Christ.

Secondly, Consider it as that which we are called to exercise in our present circumstances, without seeing him. *First,*

First, The nature of *faith in Christ* is briefly to be explained. And it must be understood to comprehend these two things.

I. A firm persuasion of the truth of what the Gospel testifies concerning him.

The whole compass of the divine revelation concerning this blessed person, is the thing to be believed. The discovery of him was made gradually, the light not breaking in all at once. Some notices were given of him immediately upon the fall, as a necessary foundation of hope to apostate creatures; and through the several periods of God's antient church, *to him gave all the prophets witness. But all the prophets and the law only prophesied until John, Mat. xi. 13. i. e.* Though they described or prefigured the Messiah in his principal characters, yet there was a degree of obscurity attending all this (as a matter is not equally clear in a prophecy to what it is in the accomplishment) till *John the Baptist* came, and directly pointed out the person. When Christ himself entred upon his publick ministry, the main thing which he took care to inculcate and give evidence of, was his being the true Messiah, and the great Prophet sent by God, promised under the Old Testament, and expected by good men from age to age. He gave indeed many intimations of the dignity of his person, of his priestly and regal offices, and of the great design of his death; yet it is plain, that these things were but darkly apprehended by

his own disciples, till the descent of the Spirit, who was to lead them into all truth. But now in the New Testament, we have the whole testimony of God concerning him completed. And all that taken together, is the object of the christian faith: his divine person, as *God over all blessed for evermore*; as *the Word*, who *was in the beginning*, who *was with God* [the Father] and who *was God*: his incarnation, or that he was *the Word made flesh*, *God manifested in the flesh*: his life, and actions and sufferings, in the human nature: the doctrine he preached, and the mighty works he did: the propitiation he made for our sins, by dying the just for the unjust: his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, and constant intercession for us there at God's right hand: the universal kingdom and dominion committed to him as Mediator; his claims from us as such; the fulness of grace dwelling in him for our supply; and the many blessings he hath authority to bestow upon us in his appointed way: and his second coming at the end of the world to complete the designs of his mediatorial kingdom. All and every part of the discovery made in Scripture concerning Christ, is the matter of a Christian's faith, as far as he can perceive it to be revealed there.

Now the first *act* of faith is a firm persuasion of the truth of this testimony. A doubtful and wavering opinion will have little practical

tical influence. Nothing can effectually animate and engage to that divine temper, to which faith in Christ is intended to raise us ; nothing can furnish us out a constant supply and nourishment for maintaining such a spirit; nothing can carry through the exercise of it in all weathers and trials, short of a lively and stedfast conviction of the truth of the Gospel. The practice of most nominal Christians is a proof of this ; and the unevenness and inconstancy which we all find in our own frames, from the infirmity of our faith, shews of what importance it is to be daily confirming the assenting act of faith. Many of Christ's disciples, while he was below, having but a faint and weak persuasion about his character, *went back, and walked no more with him*, John vi. 66. But that which under the influence of divine grace secured the rest who continued with him, was this, that *they believed, and were sure, that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God*, ver. 69.

2. A personal acceptance of Christ according to his character in the Gospel, or a consent that he shall be such to us, enters into the nature of saving faith in him. A Christian's faith is not only a general assent to Gospel-declarations ; but it includes personal application, from a consideration of our own concern in them. There is not only an act of the understanding, but correspondent acts of will and affections. There-

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fore we read more than once of *believing with the heart*, Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 9. We must heartily consent to own and accept him in all the characters he bears, and have our spirits impressed suitably to the nature and importance of what we assent to concerning him. We must deliberately recognize him, with *Thomas*, for *our Lord and our God*, John xx. 28. As he is the only Saviour of sinners; and set forth in the gospel for a propitiation, through whom pardon and acceptance with God may be had; so our belief of these general truths must be attended with the committing of our selves to him to be saved by him in his own way, and a firm reliance upon him as able and willing to perform all the kind offices for us, which are included in the character of a Saviour, *Heb. vii. 25. 2 Tim. i. 12*. There must be a *faith in his blood* for the pardon of our sins in the virtue of it. Are we persuaded, that he is the great prophet sent of God, *the faithful and true witness*; we believe not this in a Gospel-sense, unless our souls intirely bow to his instructions, and are determined to hear him, and credit him and obey him in all that he says, as far as we can discover his mind, *Matt. xvii. 5*. We own his authority to be the universal Lord and Sovereign; but then only the belief of this is genuine, when we are truly willing that he shall be in all things so to us, and fully resolved to be *under law to Christ*, 1 Cor. ix. 21. As soon as
Saul

Saul became a believer, the language of his heart was, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Our belief of his all-sufficient grace must be accompanied with a fixed dependance upon it for ourselves; being *strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. And when we contemplate his holy, and heavenly, and most useful life and behaviour, as recorded in the Gospel, a right faith eyes this as our pattern, and forms the mind to sincere purposes of imitation.

These two things are to be understood as necessarily included in a genuine faith in Christ. The fruits of it will farther appear, when we consider the other particulars mentioned into the text. I proceed,

Secondly, To consider faith in Christ, as now to be exercised by us with this circumstance attending it, that we see him not. *Tho' now ye see him not, yet believing.* The apostle plainly fixes an emphasis upon this circumstance in the character of those to whom he wrote. And the main body of believers; all, except a few in *Judea* at the very beginning of christianity, are in the same circumstance. Some may be ready to magnify overmuch the disadvantageousness of their condition in this respect; to esteem the case of those who knew Christ after the flesh, heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, far happier than their own; and to think, that they have a far harder part to maintain a lively faith
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in Christ, than those most primitive disciples had.

In answer to which, it might be sufficient to return the words of our Lord to *Thomas*. After he had expressed an unreasonable distrust of Christ's resurrection, tho' he had the testimony of so many credible persons for it; Christ condescended so far as to offer him sensible evidence of it: *Reach hither*, says our Lord, *thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, my pierced side; and be not faithless, but believing*, John xx. 27. *Thomas*, struck with admiration, cries out, *My Lord, and my God*, ver. 28. *Jesus saith unto him*, ver. 29. *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*. But as the apostle takes notice again in the text of this circumstance with commendation, and as I think it may lead us to some useful thoughts in our own condition, I chuse to consider the matter more particularly, and to offer the following things to observation.

I. An actual converse with Christ in the flesh did not produce faith in all, or even in the generality of those who had that advantage. This appears thro' the history of the Gospel. Tho' the doctrine of Christ was so divine and excellent, as often to raise the admiration of his hearers, insomuch that *they were astonished at his doctrine*, Mat. vii. 28.
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and sometimes owned, that *never man spake like this man*, John vii. 46. yet it was ineffectual to most of them for any saving purpose. His miracles, tho' so great as were never before performed, tho' the spectators were dazzled with them, and sometimes forced to own that God was with him, yet generally failed to persuade men to become his disciples in earnest. It is emphatically observed of the people of one place, *John xii. 37, 38.* that *tho' he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?* Elsewhere we find *Christ upbraiding the cities [of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum] wherein many of his mighty works were done, because they repented not*, Mat. xi. 20. The number of his disciples in the days of his flesh was but few: probably the *five hundred brethren*, of whom he is said to have been *seen at once* after his resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 6. made up the main body of the disciples he had during his personal ministry. *Judas*, who stately attended him as one of his twelve apostles, prov'd the most treacherous enemy to his master, notwithstanding that advantage. These are plain evidences how insufficient the bare sight of Christ, and personal converse with him, were of themselves to produce faith, and
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may prevent all repining that we lived not in those days.

2. Faith in Christ is as reasonably claimed from us, as it was from those who actually saw him.

For, on the one hand, those who lived in the time of Christ's sojourning on earth, had many disadvantages for their faith which we have not, to ballance some advantages which they had above us. A very general prejudice prevailed among the *Jews* at that time, that the Messiah was to set up a temporal kingdom; with which the disciples themselves appear from several passages to have been deeply tintured. This was a notion most opposite to the true character of Christ, and which made his appearance in the world in a state of meanness to be the reverse of the common expectations from the Messiah. Hereupon he was generally *despised and rejected of men*: and his death, while as yet the blessed ends and uses of it were apprehended by very few, was the greatest damp to mens faith and hope. We are released from all these disadvantages by the full revelation of the Gospel, wherein we see how ill-founded that expectation of a temporal kingdom was; and that his kingdom was not to be of this world, but of a spiritual and heavenly nature: and *Christ crucified* is manifested in the light of the New Testament to be *the wisdom and the power of God*; tho' it was *to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* On

On the other hand, tho' the first disciples had immediate sensible evidence of Christ's miracles, which we have not ; and they, who beheld him after his resurrection, and saw him ascending into heaven, had a proof of these facts more infallible in the nature of the thing, than can be pretended in our case: yet we have proofs every way sufficient. Eye and ear-witnesses of most undoubted credit, have given testimony to these things, and have sealed their testimony with their blood; and were enabled to add farther attestations by a variety of miracles, and the several gifts of the Holy Ghost, 1 *John* i. 1, 3. *That which was from the beginning*, says St. *John*, in the name of himself and of the other primitive disciples, *which we have heard* (with our own ears from Christ himself) *which we have seen with our eyes*, *which we have looked upon* (with a just care and concern that we might not be mistaken in a matter of such importance) *which our hands have handled*, of the word of life ; i. e. concerning Christ : referring probably to that evidence already mentioned, which Christ was pleased to offer to *Thomas* and the rest of his disciples of the truth of his resurrection ; which, tho' it was occasioned by an unreasonable incredulity in *Thomas*, yet was made by providence an occasion of giving a considerable assistance to the faith of after-christians. *That*, says the apostle, *which we have seen and heard*, declare

clare we unto you. And this testimony given by the first disciples, is conveyed down to us in the written records of the New Testament, which have been witnessed to, for the substance of the facts contained in them by friends and enemies from age to age.

If yet it should be said, that we stand not however just upon the same foot for these things, as the first Christians did; yet while we fall short one way, we gain another. We have several evidences of the truth of the christian religion, which they of the first age could not have, in the accomplishment of many prophecies contained in the New Testament: such as the destruction of *Jerusalem*, with all the minute circumstances of agreement between the prophecy and execution: the rejection of the *Jewish* nation, for so many ages, and with the most eminent marks of distinction: the extensive and quick propagation of the Gospel, answerable to what was foretold, notwithstanding the greatest oppositions, and by instruments very unlikely to conquer the world to the obedience of faith: the many sufferings of the professors of it, their courage and constancy, and yet the maintenance and growth of christianity under all: the rise and progress of the man of sin: and other such proofs.

We have also the standing evidence of the power of the Gospel, in the mighty change it produces in the tempers and lives of some in every

every

every age: would to God there were more such instances in our degenerate times to strike the world around with conviction and admiration! Blessed be God that there are some. Those who actually feel the virtue of it, *have the witness in themselves.*

These things may shew, that in our present circumstances, faith in Christ is most reasonably claimed from us, though we have never seen him.

3. Faith in Christ, upon the foundations we now have, is sufficient to supply the want of sight, for all practical purposes. If we are willing to believe the testimony of God, upon as full attestations that it comes from him, as we are entirely satisfied with in other cases, we cannot want considerations fit to influence us to every part of the christian life. The object of faith, the doctrine of the Gospel, contains abundant *evidence of things not seen*; a full proof of them, tho' we see them not: by faith we receive that evidence or proof as God's testimony; and if we do it sincerely, we shall act and govern ourselves by it. We have those truths recorded in the Scripture which our Lord delivered by word of mouth; and the same credentials inrolled there for the use of all ages, which Christ then gave. If we are insensible of the obligations arising from these things in our present circumstances: whatever we may imagine, it may justly be concluded, that we should have been

among the unbelievers in Christ's own time ; that the same prejudices and corrupt affections would have prevailed with us to reject Christ in person, which hinder us from entertaining him as offered in the Gospel.

4. We are called to believe many things concerning Christ, which none ever saw; and therefore for those things at least we are upon a level with those who conversed with him in our world. His life and death, and resurrection and ascension, were indeed made objects of sense to some ; but his divine nature, and the designs of his death, were intirely matters of faith to them as well as to us. What Christ is now in heaven, what he is doing there, and what he will do when he shall come again the second time, ever were things out of the reach of sense, as they are now : eye hath not seen them, tho' the ear hath heard them ; they were believed upon the word of Christ and of his inspired apostles, and so they should be by us. These things which are as important in christianity as those which were once obvious to sense, and which have as great an influence upon the christian temper, were solely matters of faith to the first Christians as well as to us.

5. There is a peculiar excellence in the faith of Christians, as thus circumstanced ; that it is a faith in a Saviour whom they have not seen. The goodness of faith consists in a readiness to believe and govern ourselves by the testimony

mony of God, as far as we can discern it. There was nothing commendable in persons believing that such and such facts came to pass, that such mighty works were done, which they saw with their eyes, and therefore could not but believe: but all that was morally good in their faith was, that they were led by these evidences to believe unseen things upon the testimony of God. The case is the same now; the grace of faith is altogether a different thing from sight: and if our sensible evidence be less than that of the first Christians; yet as long as it is sufficient, our faith thus circumstanced shews a more prompt inclination to take God's word, where we have ground enough to believe that he speaks, tho' we should not have such over-bearing evidence as some have had. The language of it is; "I am willing to know the mind of God, howsoever he pleases to make it known to me; I prescribe not to him the way: I acquiesce in the method which his wisdom, and goodness, and sovereignty chuses, for making me acquainted with it: as long as I am convinced that I have his testimony, I would fall in with it, and guide myself by it: and therefore I receive a Saviour, who I am well assured comes from him, tho' I have never seen him, as some did." This is a temper of mind honourable to God, becoming a reasonable creature, and one who is in earnest concerned for the interests of his soul.

6. We have encouragement to hope, that our faith in an unseen Saviour will be peculiarly acceptable. We not only find Christ praying before his sufferings for those *who should afterwards believe in him thro' the word of his apostles*, as well as for his present disciples; *John xvii. 20.* but also after his resurrection pronouncing a peculiar *blessedness* upon those who should *believe in him, tho' they saw him not*, *John xx. 29.* Hereby we give glory to God, as strong in faith; and God will accordingly honour such a faith. The apostle writing to the *Thessalonians*, who were called into the kingdom and fellowship of the Lord Jesus after his leaving the world, tells them, *2 Thess. i. 10.* that *he should come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, because (says the apostle) our testimony among you was believed.*

I N F E R E N C E S.

1. We may see the wisdom of divine providence, in adjusting the circumstances of those in his visible church in so equitable proportion one to another. It is true, he is a sovereign, and does not give to all advantages alike. In this as well as other respects, to some he gives ten talents, to others five, and to others one. But then he requires from none any more than in proportion to their talents. And besides that, in relation to the
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state of the church from one age to another, there may be observed a remarkable balancing of advantages and disadvantages : of which the case before us is one instance, the state of those who saw Christ in the flesh, and of those who have not seen him.

2. We may see the necessity of divine grace in order to saving faith in every age of the church. During Christ's ministry, and since also, the Gospel is *to some a saviour of life unto life*, and to others *of death unto death* : and in both periods, faith is to be considered as *the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. When the Gospel was effectual to produce saving faith in the primitive times, it was *the power of God unto salvation*, Rom. i. 16. *mighty through God* ; and so it is still. And therefore, while we are considering the excellencies of Gospel-discoveries in themselves, and the evidences given us of their truth, we should earnestly apply to God for his grace to form our minds to a faith unfeigned, a faith of the operation of God ; and through the whole course of the christian life, which is animated by faith, we should make our daily prayer, *Lord increase our faith*, Luke xvii. 5.

3. We may collect the usefulness of a standing ministry in the church. Since Christ has left the world, and was a preacher of his Gospel in person only for a few years and to one country ; it was fit that there should be some in every age and in all places, as far as may be,

to preach the Gospel to every creature. *How shall men call on him, whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?* Rom. x. 14. For this purpose the apostles were first employed to propagate the Gospel; but they did not leave the matter there, but appointed *elders* (standing *presbyters*) to be ordained in every city, Tit. i. 5. And Paul enjoins Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 2. *The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* If it should be said, that the need of such is now superseded by the Gospel's being committed to writing: I answer; the writings of the New Testament appoint this farther provision, as in the place just mentioned, and therefore for certain do not supersede it. All our doctrine indeed must be tried by the written word; we are *not lords of mens faith: but helpers of their joy*; and nothing which we deliver hath any authority, farther than we can support it by evidence from the Scriptures. But the business of ministers is to help you to understand the Scriptures, and to represent to your consciences the truths contained there. If there were no such provision, I believe religion would be at a far lower ebb in the world than it is. It is God's appointed and usual way for bringing men to the obedience of
 faith,

faith, and for the perfecting of the saints, to instruct, admonish and exhort men by men like themselves, who have the same everlasting interests to mind, and need the same favour as they do.

4. We have reason to be content with the circumstances of that age of the world, wherein our lot is cast. We are favoured with sufficient advantages, and are encouraged to apply for the same grace to make them effectual. And indeed the condition we are in, that we see not the Saviour in whom we believe, is entirely of a piece with the rest of a Christian's state in this world. The main objects of our attention and concern, as Christians, are things invisible. *We walk by faith and not by sight,* 2 Cor. v. 7. *We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen,* chap. iv. 18. Our chief concern is with an invisible God, *Heb. xi. 27.* The principal benefits we have to value are *spiritual blessings,* Eph. i. 3. and the inheritance we are born to is out of sight. It is suitable therefore to all the rest, that our Redeemer should be so too. This is a circumstance which may greatly contribute to promote one principal branch of the christian disposition, to aspire after a heavenly country, when we must consider our dear Saviour as already there *at the right hand of God,* Col. iii. 1. It facilitates to a Christian the work of dying, to think that his death is not a removal from his Lord, but going to him.

5. Let

5. Let us be very solicitous, that under our many advantages, and by the help of that grace so ready to be bestowed, we may *believe to the saving of our souls*. That every part of the testimony which God hath born to his Son, be readily entertained by us; and that we receive and appropriate him to our selves for all the uses and purposes for which he is offered in the Gospel.

6. Let our faith in him be allowed its proper practical influence upon the whole christian temper and life. More immediately upon those holy dispositions towards Christ himself, of which the text speaks; love to him, and joy in him. If our faith thus *work by love*, and work us up to the genuine joy of living Christians, this cannot fail to animate the whole of the divine life,

S E R M O N XI.

Love to Christ.

I P E T. i. 8.

Whom, having not seen, ye love: in whom, tho' now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

TH E practical regards we owe to the Lord Jesus himself, make an eminent and distinguishing part of the christian temper; of which regards these words may be understood as a summary. How should Christians stand affected to their master? Just as these antient Christians in the text were affected towards him. Their first concern should be, that they may have a genuine, a firm and lively faith in him; so they had, whom St. *Peter* celebrates tho' they had never seen him in the flesh, any more than we. Then their faith in him kindled in their breasts

a holy and a strong affection to him: and upon the foundation of *faith* and *love*, they were able to rise up to a triumphant joy in him.

The *first* of these, *faith in him*, has been the subject of a former discourse. This is to be employed in the *second* branch.

II. Love to Christ, as the fruit of faith in him, tho' he is unseen, is a necessary part of the christian disposition. It is so necessary, that on the one hand, all those that are destitute of it lie under a dreadful curse; a curse pronounced by an apostle under the spirit of inspiration, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maran-atha*; accursed, till the Lord comes. And on the other hand, all who are truly of this disposition, are encouraged by the apostle's benediction to expect all the fruits of divine favour, *Eph. vi. 24. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.*

In the prosecution of this, I shall shew, 1st, the grounds of a Christian's affection to Christ. 2dly, The characters of it. And, 3dly, The ways in which it is to be expressed.

First, The grounds of a Christian's affection to Christ.

In general, the foundation is laid in his faith. Tho' *faith* is only mentioned expressly in the latter part of the verse, as the ground
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of a Christian's joy; yet it must equally be presupposed to his love. Having not seen him, the people in the text could have no other ground for their love: and if they had seen him, and personally conversed with him; yet, without believing more concerning him than sight could inform them of, they could never have had the affection required by the Gospel. But a firm assent to the testimony of God concerning Christ will furnish us with all the motives to affection which personal converse could suggest; and superadd all those which sight and sense could never furnish. Now he who truly believes in Christ, loves him,

1. *For his own personal excellencies, or, because of what he is in himself; both as God and man. We beheld, says St. John, his glory; the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, John i. 14.* His disciples, who conversed with him in the days of his flesh, had some view of his glorious perfections shining out thro' all the cloud of his meanness, while they heard his divine discourses, and beheld his mighty works, worthy of the Son of God: *Full of grace and truth; breathing out the richest grace and good-will to sinful men; and publishing those divine and heavenly truths which none but God could reveal, none but he who came out of the bosom of the Father, ver. 18.* They had some manifestations of his glory:

glory : we have the same discoveries, which were made to them, proposed to our faith in the Gospel-relation ; and a great deal more than they were particularly instructed in, till Jesus was removed out of their sight. The Gospel represents him to us, as one in whose blessed person all uncreated and created excellencies meet ; as one *in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* : who by his divine perfections deserves our highest veneration ; and yet by condescending to partake of our nature, prevents the terror which would arise from unveiled divinity. *The Lord of glory* is become our brother, *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*. He is proposed to us, as possessed of the all-sufficiency of God, and yet *found in fashion as a man* ; as having a divine fulness, with a human way of communicating it. And his human nature itself is such, as hath all the excellencies of our nature, without any of the defiling stains : such as makes him most familiar to us, because *in all things made like unto us* ; and yet he was full of wisdom, grace and sufficiency to the utmost capacity of a finite limited nature, because *anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*. Such is the representation made to our faith of his personal excellencies ; which makes him upon that account worthy of our adoring thoughts, and uniting affections.

2. *Because of the near resemblance he bears to God, as man and Mediator, and the high esteem which God hath expressed for him as such.* The supreme affection of a Christian is to the blessed God: he looks upon him as the best of beings, and the standard of excellence; and his love to God is the regulating measure of his love to other things. This was the original temper of innocence; God was loved above all, and other things only in subordination to him. Sin was the breach of this rule of righteousness: and all is out of order with us, till we return to our first measure; to love God with all our hearts, so as to have no competitor with him; and thereupon to give other things a share in our affection according to God's allowance, according to the degrees of his image which they bear, and according to the esteem which he discovers for them. Our value and affection for all other things in the whole order of beings, should rise or fall by this rule. Now a true Christian proceeds by this measure in the prevailing bent of his heart. Hence he *delights in the excellent of the earth*, more than in other men, *Psal. xvi. 2.* And for the same reason, the blessed Jesus is raised in his esteem above all other things. Not only as in his divine nature *he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, *Heb. i. 3.* but as, even in his human nature, and in his mediatorial character, he bears

bears more of the divine image than any other creature ; as perfectly holy, intirely obedient, and the most faithful servant to his Father. And therefore God has highly honoured him, as he has honoured God more than any other has done. Hence the Christian pays a high regard to him also. The testimonies which God has given of his complacency in him ; by voices from heaven, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* ; by raising him from the dead ; by highly exalting him, and giving him a name above every name ; dispose a Christian to be well pleased with him also, and to reverence his name. The Mediator, as such, has the next interest in his affections to God himself ; because God has put a greater character of distinction upon him, than upon any other.

3. *Because of the excellence of his work, and the unspeakable love and benignity he has expressed in it.* This may all pass for nothing with a stupid inconsiderate sinner : he may go on in an ungrateful forgetfulness and disregard of all the kindness which the Redeemer has shewn. But a true Christian has his soul fixed in attention to his wondrous works ; and the springs of gratitude are set afloat by the consideration of them. His love and value are drawn out by the contemplation of the Son of God's early compassion for us ; when in the counsel of peace he engaged to vail his glory, to assume the form of a servant,

vant, and to make his soul an offering for sin, that he might reconcile the honour of heaven with the happiness of fallen men. He views him actually executing his engagement in the fulness of time; taking part of our nature; becoming a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself; and, after a life of continual abasement, feeling the extremest agonies of soul, and anguish of body, suffering from every quarter and in every part; in a word, *giving himself for us*, that he might bring us to God. The love conspicuous in every part of his sufferings, kindles a lively affection and gratitude in the heart of a Christian. The more he thinks of it, the more he sees himself to be infinitely indebted. When he follows him up from his cross to his crown of glory, he sees him there still minding our interests, acting for our welfare, and with a heart as tenderly affected towards us as ever. The present glories of his human nature do not extinguish his concern for us, or his sympathy with us here on earth. Unbelieving minds can hear such things as these frequently concerning him, without the least spark of ingenuity excited in their breasts: but a Christian, who believes them with the heart, feels a disposition to receive kindly and becoming impressions from the Redeemer's grace, and to study what he shall render.

4. *As the most necessary medium of our happiness.* The men of the world place their happiness wrong; not in the favour of God, but in worldly good. They are not sensible, that though they had all the world, they are still as much as ever to seek for happiness, without an interest in God. Or if they have some apprehension, that it must be a miserable case to have God for an enemy; yet they hope for his favour at random, or think they can establish a righteousness of their own to recommend them to God; they are not thoroughly touched with an apprehension of the value of a Saviour; but either imagine themselves whole, and to have no need of a physician, or that they can be their own physician: or that they can find out some other expedient for relief, besides that proposed to sinners in the Gospel. But a true Christian sees, that in himself he is a necessitous miserable creature; that nothing can restore him to happiness, short of God as his portion; and that he has no other way of coming at God, but by Christ. He esteems Christ therefore the most necessary means to his chief good, the only suitable physician to his dying soul; and upon that account values him as his *all in all*. *In him he has righteousness and strength.* However others make a shift to pass easy hours without a pardon, he cannot: for he knows, that all his guilt must remain upon him, unless he has an interest in Christ's propitiation. He wants
many

many blessings at the hand of God, but he has no merit of his own to plead for obtaining them ; and therefore he prizes Christ, in whose name God has promised to hear all his proper requests. He is sensible, that he needs constant supplies of grace for the various parts of the christian life ; and believes, *that it hath pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell*, as in a treasury, from which his children are to receive all their supplies. He perceives himself to be frail, and still liable to break the peace by new offences, and therefore prizes Christ as his constant advocate with the Father. He is looking for his principal happiness in a world to come ; and Christ's entrance thither is the main security for it : he *has that eternal right to give*, and *from him* he waits to *receive the inheritance*. Upon such accounts as these, he loves and esteems the Redeemer, as worth infinitely more to him than all the world ; as the person by whom alone he comes to God, through whom God is favourable to him, and by whom his final expectations are to be accomplished.

Secondly, I proceed to offer some scripture-characters of a true Christian's love to Christ upon such grounds as these.

In the general, they may all be summed up in this, that it is sincere and unfeigned. *Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, Eph. vi. 24. Which, on the one hand, distinguishes it from absolute

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perfection ; no Christian in this world loves Christ in the degree that he ought to do, or that he would do, or that the saints in glory arrive at : but on the other hand, every acceptable Christian loves him *truly*, i. e.

It is the temper of his soul, and not a mere outward appearance. We read of some, *Ezek. xxxiii. 31.* who *with their mouth shewed much love, but their heart went after their covetousness.* So it may be with reference to the Lord Jesus. Men may speak honourably of him, his person, his offices, his laws ; and so they ought to do : but yet all this may be without any sincere affection to him ; his enemies may still be on the throne in the heart. A true Christian satisfies not himself with professions of respect, without correspondent affections of soul.

He loves Christ in his whole character. If Christ could be divided, ungodly men might entertain some liking of him : If they could be excused from wrath to come by virtue of his sufferings without forsaking their sins, they might be content so far to be beholden to him ; but they have a fixed enmity to the main design of his coming, to save them from their sins. Now here is an essential difference in the character of a real Christian from that of others ; Christ entirely is amiable and acceptable to such a man. He values Christ as his teacher and lawgiver ; and not only the atonement for his sins, and his advocate with the
Father.

Father. He esteems *his yoke easy*, as well as his *promises precious*; and sees a glory in his pattern, as well as his propitiation. He loves him, because a conquest over the body of death is begun, and shall be compleated thro' Jesus Christ, as well as because he will deliver him from the wrath to come.

He loves Christ more than any thing else. Great stress is laid upon this in Scripture. *He that loveth, saith Christ, father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me*, Matt. x. 37. And therefore, when Christ would set *Peter* upon the examination of his sincere affection to his Lord, he expresses the question thus, *John xxi. 15. Lovest thou me more than these?* either than these thy friends and companions, or these thy nets, (for he was then fishing) *i. e.* thy secular gains and advantages?

And, lastly, genuine love to Christ is productive of proper fruit. As faith produces love, so it *works by love*, Gal. v. 6. Thence we read of *the work of faith, and labour of love*, 1 Theff. i. 3. A Christian expresses his high esteem and sincere affection, in the natural effects of such a temper of mind. And this leads me to the third general head I proposed, *viz.*

Thirdly, To shew the ways in which a Christian is to express his affection to Christ.

Now the circumstance observed in the text, of the present state of our case, that *now we*

see him not, naturally leads us to such expressions of affection as are suitable to that state, wherein we know him not after the flesh. Those who lived in the time of his abode upon earth, had opportunities to shew their love to him in some ways of personal respect and outward civilities, wherein we can bear no part with them: but indeed such marks of affection were not of so great account with Christ then, as many of those, wherein we in this state of separation may evidence our love to him, as well as his disciples at that time could do. Some principal instances of that kind I would now mention. Our love to an unseen Saviour should express itself,

1. In frequent thoughts of him. Our thoughts will often present a dear friend to our remembrance, when he is absent in body. So they should frequently bring to our minds our peculiar friend, the Lord Jesus; and so they will, if we truly value him as our best friend. If our *delight be in the law of God*, we shall *meditate therein day and night*, Psal. i. 2. And so the Son of God will be a chosen, pleasing theme of frequent meditation, if he is really the object of our affection. We shall often think with enlarged hearts what he is, what he has done for us, what his present state is. We shall desire to *know nothing so much as him*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. to *grow in the knowledge of him*, 2 Pet. iii. 18. as a subject of which we can never have too much.

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2. In a careful observance of what he has left us in charge. Love will make a friend's desires as binding as commands; and we shall not forget, when he is out of sight, any intimations he has given of his mind. Indeed this is the principal way wherein Christ expects his disciples to testify their love to him: so he signified to those who attended him on earth; *If ye love me, keep my commandments,* John xiv. 15. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,* John xv. 14. The Gospel comprehends the charge he has left behind him; and the last words we find of his, when he was leaving the world, contain a general admonition to observe his instructions. His parting charge to his apostles was, that they should *teach men to observe all things, whatsoever he had commanded them;* Matth. xxviii. 20. Love to him will inforce all this, will sweeten his yoke, and write his laws in our hearts with an indelible character.

3. In maintaining our fidelity during his bodily absence. Christ is *gone above to receive for himself a kingdom,* and we are by his rightful claim the subjects of it. There are many enemies, who would usurp his throne, and draw off our allegiance; and they have the advantage of presence: and therefore without a firm affection to our Lord we are in danger of proving unfaithful. A deceitful world is insnaring us; the old serpent manages the snares of it, to remove us from our steadfast-

ness; and we have deceitful lusts within our selves, ready to side with the opposite party. Here is the great trial of our affection; whether we maintain hearts loyal to the Lord Jesus, in opposition to these enemies of his. In every snare we meet with, we should remember that there is a plot of treason against our chosen sovereign, our rightful head and Lord: and our affection to Christ will be shewn, in maintaining a resolute conflict against them all, in the strength of his grace. We may be exposed to sufferings of various kinds in the course of our adherence to him, to the loss of the most valuable comforts of this life, or even of life itself, unless we will be unfaithful to him: now in case of such a trial, if we love Christ supremely, we shall *not love our lives unto the death*, as is said of the martyrs, *Rev. xii. 11.*

4. In a dutiful regard to the Holy Spirit, whom he has left to supply his room. If a prince has the hearts of his subjects, when his occasions call him away from them for a season, they will shew their love to him by subjection and respects to such as he leaves behind to fill his place. Now Christ has told us, that *it was expedient, and for us too, that he should go away; for if he went not away, the Comforter would not come; but if he went, he would send him*, John xvi. 7. He has sent him accordingly, to take care of his concerns and interest in the world; and by him he is still graciously present with us. The
Holy

Holy Spirit deserves our love and subjection, not only upon his own account, as he is God; but also upon account of the character he sustains, as sent to supply Christ's room. We should therefore shew our affection to Christ, by a care that we *grieve not his Holy Spirit*, Eph. iv. 30. that we *quench him not*, by neglecting his kind motions; but that we thankfully accept and improve so gracious and suitable a provision, which our exalted Head has made to carry us through our state of trial.

5. In respect to his friends and favourites for his sake. It is always an acceptable piece of affection to a friend, when he is out of our reach himself, if yet we are kind to his friends or relations upon his account. Christ himself is above receiving in his own person any acts of beneficence from us: but he has left friends and relations in our world, who are capable of receiving the sensible effects of our love, and to whom we may shew kindness for his sake. And he has appointed us to them, as such who would always be at hand to receive our kind offices, when he was himself about to be advanced above all need of any such thing, *John xii. 8. The poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.* He has condescended to say, that what we do to them for his sake, he will take as done to himself, *Mat. xxv. 40.* And they who cannot find in their hearts, upon such a

declaration of Christ, to shew kindness to his members according to their power, would hardly do it to Christ himself, if he were among them, and needed their assistance.

6. In a concern for his interest, and endeavours to promote it, according to our stations and capacities. Tho' he is gone in person above; yet he has still a cause and interest below, which he has much at heart. The salvation of lost sinners, the refining and enlargement of his church, the propagation of truth, and charity, and holiness, the reformation of manners, and the overthrow of Satan's kingdom, make the interest of Christ in our world. And for promoting these ends, he is pleased to make use of his servants on earth; and in order to it, furnishes them with various *talents*, which he expects them *to occupy till he comes*, for the advancement of his service. Now the principle which should animate us to do this in good earnest, is love to Christ. That will induce us to list our gifts and graces, our interest and substance, our time and furniture, in the service of the cause of Christ around us; and will make us *unwearied in well doing*. When Christ put the question to *Peter, lovest thou me?* he directs him to shew it by vigilance in his proper sphere for his master's service, by *feeding his sheep and lambs*, John xxi. 15, &c. And the case is the same as to any other capacities or opportunities of service, with which he has intrusted us. 7. In

7. In a delightful regard for those things, by which we may be helped to remember him, or to converse with him, in our present state. We take pleasure in any thing that is the memorial of a valuable friend, when he has left us; or in conversing by letter, when we cannot do so in person. Some of the ordinances of the Gospel are memorials of Christ; and all of them are ways, whereby we are directed to maintain a spiritual converse with him, while he is absent in body. He has appointed all his disciples to observe his supper *in remembrance of him*, Luke xxii. 19. How then can a lively affection for him consist with an indisposition to comply with his call herein? The weekly day of our publick worship has his name fixed upon it by St. *John*, *the Lord's-day*, Rev. i. 10. It was the day when his exaltation commenced by his discharge from the prison of the grave, and therefore was made the accustomed season of the solemn assemblies of his disciples from the most primitive times, *John* xx. 19, 26. *Acts* xx. 7. *1 Cor.* xvi. 2. And shall not our love to him induce us to esteem that day our delight, and chearfully to imploy it in thinking of him, in hearing from him, in serving him, and converse with him? He has promised his presence in every Gospel-institution, *Mat.* xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* Shall we not gladly embrace
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such opportunities, as those who have ardent desires to meet our blessed Lord?

8. In strong desires after the nearest and fullest enjoyment of him in heaven. Indeed the belief of his love to us, may justly make a Christian satisfied to stay his Master's time for this: but a true love to him can hardly consist with an absolute contentment to be here always in this state of separation, or of very imperfect and constant enjoyment: no, there will be aspirings to be *with him* where he is, as *far better* than any thing of earth, or even than the most of God, and Christ, and heaven, that is to be enjoyed upon earth. Want or weakness of affection to Christ is the ordinary reason, why that is the temper of so few Christians in our time, which the apostle declares to have been his own, *2 Cor. v. 8. Willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.*

Now it will be our wisdom impartially to examine our love to Christ, the sincerity, or the strength of it, by such plain Scripture-marks as these. It is not our calling him *Lord, Lord*, without these practical and genuine expressions of a sincere and supreme value for him, that will either secure his acknowledgment of us at the great day, or rise up to joy unspeakable now.

S E R M O N XII.

Rejoicing in Christ.

I P E T. i. 8.

Whom, having not seen, ye love: in whom, tho' now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

TWO branches of the christian disposition toward the blessed Jesus, have been particularly discoursed of from this passage; *believing* in him, and *love* to him. One yet remains to be considered.

III. *Rejoicing* in Christ; which, as well as the other, is affirmed here by the apostle to have been the frame of the primitive Christians: *In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

Joy in him is an advance upon our faith and live. It imports a rest and satisfaction of mind,
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upon the apprehension we have of his real excellence, and of the benefits accruing to us by him. The word used in another place, *Phil. iii. 3.* to express this temper, *ἠαυχαῖσθαι*, signifies to *glory* or *triumph* in Christ: and so our translators render it in *Gal. vi. 14.* *God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ.* The apostle observes of the *Jews*, that they *rested in the law*, the *Mosaical law*, and they *made their boast of God*, *Rom. ii. 17.* The same word is there used; they *gloried in God*; i. e. they gloried in their visible relation to God, as eminently their God, beyond what he was to the heathen world, by virtue of the covenant of peculiarity made with their nation, upon their consent to observe the law of *Moses*, *Exod. xix.* These Christians, on the other hand, of whom the apostle speaks in the text, upon their conversion from *Judaism* to *Christianity*, gloried and rejoiced in Christ, as opening the way to a more distinguishing relation to God, than that to which the *Jewish* nation was admitted by virtue of the *Mosaical* covenant. They esteemed Christ to *bring glad tidings of greater joy* than *Moses* did, to be *more full of grace and truth*; and therefore rejoiced in him, as having found the best treasure.

The two characters given of their joy, intimate the high degree of it. It was *joy unspeakable*, more than they could express; they could hardly apprise others what a joy they

they felt. And it was *full of glory*. The word exactly rendered is *glorified joy*: it was akin to the joy felt by those in the glorified state.

But it may be said; though these primitive believers thus rejoiced in Christ, is this to be esteemed a necessary part of every true Christian's character?

I answer, The Gospel gives reason to all who entertain it for such a high degree of joy: certainly it may be attained, and is a frame fit to be aspired at by all Christians, since it is left upon record as the actual character of these primitive examples. But I am far from thinking it in such a large measure, to be an essential character of a Christian. And yet a prevalence of this temper, as well as of faith and love, must be understood as a discriminating mark of every sincere Christian: for so St. Paul represents it, *Phil. iii. 3. We are the circumcision, the true people of God, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus.*

I shall therefore consider, 1st, The grounds, which a Christian has for joy in Christ. And, 2^{dly}, How far it may be esteemed the necessary temper of every true Christian. And then make some reflections.

First, I am to consider the grounds, which a Christian has for rejoicing in Christ.

And upon this head I would observe, that

(1.) The Gospel-revelation furnishes the materials of his joy. (2.) His faith in that revelation

revelation is the principle of his joy. (3.) The efficacy of his faith, as working by love, gives him ground for still a more special joy.

I. The Gospel-revelation furnishes the materials of his joy ; the good news, the glad tidings contained in the blessed Gospel. For instance,

(1.) The kind and gracious design upon which *Jesus* came into the world. One, which had the most comfortable aspect upon mankind, of any thing which was ever manifested since the apostacy. It was to testify the *good-will* of an offended God *toward men*, and to open a way for the free communication of it ; which was accordingly proclaimed at his birth by the heavenly host, *Luke ii. 14. God sent his Son, not to condemn the world ; as our guilty fears might have surmised, if notice had been given of his approach, without any account of the design of it ; but that thro' him the world might be saved, John iii. 17. To seek and save them that were lost, Luke xix. 10. And not only such as had been guilty of less offences, but even the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. To save them from their sins, themselves, Matth. i. 21. and from the wrath to come, due upon that account, 2 Thess. i. 10.*

What a subject of joy is this ! considering the greatness of the evils in which we were involved, and to which we were farther liable.

able. We were alienated from God, under the sentence of condemnation, ready to fall into the hands of the living God. And at the same time we were utterly unable to help ourselves. *We had destroyed ourselves; but in God alone, if any where, our help must be found.* We could neither resist his almighty vengeance, nor atone his just displeasure. All other ways, which carried an air of relief, were insufficient to reach their end. There were sacrifices under the law to put away sin; but they were not sufficient to purify, as pertaining to the conscience. *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not,* says the Son of God; *then I said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,* Heb. x. 5, 7. And yet, when this grace was intended us, we were altogether unworthy of any instance of compassion; and therefore have the more abundant reason to rejoice, that notwithstanding that, a saving design is set on foot.

(2.) The capacity and fitness of *Jesus* to accomplish this gracious design, is a farther ground of joy in him. *Help is laid upon one mighty to save; able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him.*

The constitution of his person admirably qualified him for this province. The dignity of his divine nature ennobled his offering, so that *the church* was fully redeemed by his blood, Acts xx. 88. By his having been in *the bosom of the Father*, he was every way furnished

nished to *reveal him*, his will and grace to the world, *John* i. 18. On the other hand, by his condescending to be made flesh, he *had wherewith to offer*, *Heb.* viii. 3. *A body was prepared him*, that he might *bear our sins in his own body on the tree*. By the same means, when he became our instructor, the terrors which must have seized us, had God himself in his glory spoke to us, were prevented. And his government is become more suitable, as he is *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*.

The full commission, which he received to be our Mediator, enters into his capacity to be a Saviour. None but God, our ruler and judge, could authorise and make valid any expedient for our relief: he might have insisted on our bearing in our own persons the punishment we had deserved. It is therefore matter of great joy, that he hath commissioned the Saviour, sent him on the errand, and laid himself under engagements, that when he should make his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed.

The furniture and qualifications of his human nature for the performance of his undertaking, are a most grateful discovery of his meetness: that he was *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*; and that he received the most perfect unction of the Holy Spirit: for *such an high priest became us*, *Heb.* vii. 26.

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He was invested in all the offices, which our condition required. That of a prophet, to relieve our ignorance: of a priest, to remove our guilt: and of a king, to subdue our enmity, and by his power to overcome the many enemies of our souls. By his *priestly* office to procure our salvation, in his *prophetical* to reveal it, and by his *regal* to confer it.

This is a foundation of joy, that a person is sent to be the Saviour, who was fully capable of the province.

(3.) The several parts of his work in prosecution of this design, one way or other subserve it, and so may heighten the Christian's joy. By his doctrine he acquainted us with the counsel of God, explained the spirituality and perfection of his law, introduced a more reasonable service, and opened a door of hope for us, *sinners of the Gentiles*. By his holy and useful life he gave us a perfect and a moving pattern. By his miracles he proved his divine mission. His death was a full propitiation for our sins, the price of our redemption, a foundation for conquest over all our enemies, and a necessary step to all the advantage we can hope for from his exaltation and kingdom. Surely then we have reason to *glory in the cross of Christ*, Gal. vi. 14. His resurrection succeeded, to open all the springs of joy, as the great evidence of his divine character, and of the sufficiency of his

death. His going away into the unseen world *was expedient for us*, John xvi. 7. He *entred* heaven *as our forerunner*; and his work there, from his entrance to the end of time, is of the most signal advantage to his church. When he ascended into the heavenly places, he sent down his Spirit; not only to give the last attestations to the Gospel, and to enable the apostles to complete the revelation of it; but to carry on the saving design, and to supply all remaining wants, which he had not provided for in person. He ever lives above, as our advocate with the Father, to make intercession for us. And as *all power in heaven and earth is committed to him*, so he exercises it for the good of his servants; for he is head *over all things to the church*, or for the benefit of his church. *He can be touched* above *with the feeling of our infirmities* on earth. And when we have served our generation, he is ready to *receive our departing spirits*. But while we may *look back* with complacence upon his *past* work on earth, and *look up* with pleasure upon his *present* work in heaven; how much more may we *look forward* with joy to his *future* work, when *he shall come the second time without a sin-offering to salvation*, to the final and complete salvation of all his followers? when *he shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe?*

(4.) The privileges with which he hath invested his church at present, are reasons for rejoicing in him. These exceed all that were afforded in any former dispensation.

A more spiritual and rational worship is set up by him; more worthy of God, and conducive to our edification. And we are discharged from that *yoke which the fathers were not able to bear.*

We are allowed a freer access to God. Every Christian has a fuller liberty of coming to God, than the high-priest himself had in the former dispensation; being allowed to come in the prevailing name of Christ, and with a spirit of adoption. But this is so considerable a branch of the christian temper, that I intend to treat of it hereafter distinctly; and therefore prosecute it no farther here.

And beside all this, a clearer view is given us of the future happiness, by this finishing revelation, to raise our joy to a higher pitch. Which leads me to observe, in the last place,

(5.) The promises given us by Christ are most comfortable and joyful. God has *given us by the Gospel exceeding great and precious promises, 2 Pet. i. 4.* This *better covenant is established upon better promises* than the Jewish covenant, *Heb. viii. 6.* Upon promises better in their nature than that as a national covenant was ratified by; for those were

only temporal promises: and upon promises, better in respect of clearness and fulness, than the promises of grace under the Old Testament reached to.

The promise of pardon is more clear, and full, and extensive than before; to all sins and sinners. *By Christ, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses,* Acts xiii. 39.

The felicity of the intermediate state before the resurrection, for all good men, is a thing we hear not so much of under the Old Testament, as in the New. And the greatness and certainty of the final happiness, is much more clearly brought to light, 2 *Tim.* i. 10.

And the same must be said of the influences of the Holy Spirit. Tho' good men before the coming of Christ were not utter strangers to any of these things, yet they saw them but in a glass darkly, in comparison of our light about them. And then, all the promises of God have had such a peculiar ratification by the blood of Christ, as makes the comfort of them exceedingly greater; for they are *yea and amen in him*, 2 *Cor.* i. 20. They are become God's *New Testament* to us, or his *covenant* with us *in Christ's blood*, Luke xxii. 10.

These are some of the principal materials of a Christian's joy in Christ. Now,

2. His

2. His *faith* in this revelation of the Gospel concerning Christ, is the principle of his joy: *In whom believing, ye rejoice.* Unless credit is given to the testimony of the Gospel, all this blessed discovery will not affect the soul; and the degrees of our joy can only be in proportion to the strength or weakness of our faith. Because the faith of the primitive Christians was at a higher pitch than that of the generality of Christians now; therefore their joy in him was more elevated. But equal faith would produce equal joy: such a faith, as shall answer the apostle's description, *Heb. xi. 1.* that it is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.* Such a firm reliance upon the testimony of God in the Gospel, that what is related there concerning Christ's past work on earth, and his present employment in heaven, and what is foretold of his second appearance, is esteemed as real, and sure, and substantial, as if we had the evidence of sense or reason in the case: a faith that gives present existence in our minds to the things revealed of him, whether invisible in their nature, or long since past and gone, or now doing beyond the bounds of our world, or not to be accomplished till the end of time. The nearer approaches our faith makes to this height, so much the more will our joy rise. When *St. Paul* would wish a singular enlargement to the joy of the Ro-

mans, he prays for it as attainable only by the mediation of faith, *Rom. xv. 13.* *The God of hope fill you all with joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.*

3. The efficacy of his faith, as *working by love*, gives a Christian reason for the most *special* and appropriating joy.

Indeed a faith in the general revelation, may justly produce a lively joy in the breast of a convinced sinner. To have the good-will of God to lost sinners proclaimed, by sending his Son to save them; to be assured, that all things are ready in virtue of what he hath done and suffered; that the greatest benefits are offered to all without distinction; that we are encouraged to ask for the Holy Spirit; in a word, that our salvation is made possible, and we are yet in a state of trial: such discoveries may justly set open the springs of joy; though it should be *certain*, that we are not yet in a state of salvation; and especially, tho' it should be *doubtful* whether we are so or not. What gladness may we suppose it would produce in damned spirits, could the same things be proposed to them, with the same degrees of hope in their case? We find such general notices were entertained by many of the Gentiles with great pleasure of mind, even before they were arrived at a complete faith. When St. Paul acquainted them, *Acts xiii. 47, 48.* that *the Lord commanded him and the other apostles*

ables to let them know, that *Christ was set to be a light of the Gentiles; that he should be for salvation to the ends of the earth: we are told, that when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained, or disposed and fitted to eternal life, believed.* They entertained the first tidings with gladness, which by the grace of God prepared and disposed the minds of many to believe to the saving of their souls.

But then there is a higher and more satisfying joy, resulting from the sense of actual interest in Christ, and a hope that we are already in the way of salvation by him. Now in order to this, not only the general *assenting* act of faith is necessary; but the *consenting* acts also, that Christ shall be all that *to us*, for which he is offered in the Gospel: our faith must produce love, and that love prove itself genuine by such proper fruits of it as were mentioned in the last discourse. This is the way, under the influences of the divine Spirit, to arrive at a special and distinguishing joy in Christ. Our rejoicing in ourselves is not inconsistent with this appropriating joy in Christ, but necessary to it, *i. e.* a joy in the grace of God found in ourselves, *Gal. vi 4. Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*

Secondly, proceed to shew, how far it may be esteemed the essential temper of a true Christian, that he rejoices in Christ.

1. A special and appropriating joy is not necessary to the being of a Christian; though it is very needful to his well-being and usefulness. It is every Christian's duty, as well as his interest, to *give all diligence to make his calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. So he will be able to walk more chearfully and comfortably with God, the duties of the christian life will be more pleasant, and death more welcome. *So an entrance will be ministred to him abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, ver. 11. By this means he will adorn the Gospel, and recommend it to the esteem and acceptance of an observing world.

But yet this peculiar joy cannot be pronounced essential to a Christian, without excluding many from that character, whom I doubt not our Lord will receive; who cannot *so* rejoice in Christ, because they are not assured that he is theirs.

Some are full of doubts about their state, *from mistaken apprehensions of the terms of the Gospel-covenant*, when in truth they have good reason for better hopes. They are really *in Christ*, or true Christians, whose faith in him hath such a measure of strength, as engages them heartily to give up themselves to his instruction and conduct, and to rely upon him as an all-sufficient Saviour: whose love is unfeigned, superior to their affection to other things, so as to make them willing to do
his

his commandments, fearful of offending him, grieved when they do so, and resolved to part with any thing rather than lose his favour: who make conscience of every part of his will as far as they know it, without a stated reserve for the chosen practice of any known sin, or an allowed, deliberate exception against any known duty. All such are true Christians, and certainly accepted of God. But there are many to whom these characters belong, and whose consciences upon the strictest examination bear witness to thus much, who yet cannot be satisfied through the weakness of their judgment, and their fears of being mistaken in a matter of such importance. If they are asked the grounds of their doubts and fears, they appear to be no more than the ordinary imperfections, which more or less attend all good men in this life: they cannot be so lively and fixed in holy duties, as they would; they are not always in the same devout frame; vain and evil thoughts dart into their minds; their love to God and Christ are not at the pitch they would have them, they find remains of sin still in being, to occasion their daily watchfulness and warfare. But the Gospel-covenant doth not exclude men from a relation to Christ for such things as these: it is the fruit of a pious mind, that they are so burdensom; but a weakness attending them, if that concern so far prevails, as to make them overlook the substantial evidences they might discern

discern of a sincere devotedness to God. Yet while their weakness induces them to exclude themselves out of the number of God's children, God forbid we should imagine that for that reason he will exclude them.

Others have much more reason for their fears. Their grace and holiness, in the substantial parts of it, is really so imperfect, if indeed they are in a state of acceptance with God, that it is justly a matter of doubt whether their hearts are right with God. The balance is so near even, between the interest of God and the world in their hearts; every good disposition is so weak, and the opposite corruptions so strong; there are so great interruptions and frequent breaches in the course of their obedience; that it is not easy to discern to what master they yield themselves servants to obey, whether sin or righteousness. Now in such a case, though if grace really prevail, they are in a state of acceptance; yet they cannot justly conclude this positively, till the prevalence becomes more conspicuous: nor is it their immediate duty to entertain this appropriating joy, but to use more diligence for making their sincerity unquestionable; and then with the improvement of grace and mortification of sin, they will have a clearer foundation for a favourable conclusion concerning their state. In the mean while, doubting may do them good, by quickning their diligence to clear their title. It is not fit that men should stifle their consciences, or think themselves better than they are,

are, or determine that they are in a safe case, while really it is very hard to decide whether sin or holiness have the ascendant.

Besides all this, actual joy in Christ may be obstructed in the best men *by a constitutional or occasional melancholy*. When the body is oppressed with black and heavy humours, and the due circulation of the blood obstructed, the mind is unavoidably indisposed for any sort of chearfulness. And when men plainly appear unapt to take pleasure in other things, in the enjoyments of life, in agreeable friends and relations; it is no more an evidence that they are not true Christians, because they cannot think of Christ and his benefits with such pleasure and satisfaction, as some other Christians do, than it is to be esteemed an evidence that they are not sensible or reasonable creatures, because they seem to have no relish for sensible good or suitable society. Both are the effects of bodily distemper, and that must be removed before they will be capable of any sort of chearful affection. Yet,

2. There are some expressions of a mind truly rejoicing in Christ Jesus in every sincere Christian, even under his clouds and fears: That is, expressions of that value for Christ, which would shew itself in chearful joy, if that was not obstructed by tender fears about his state, or by bodily distemper.

It is the habitual and fixed judgment of his mind, that Christ and his benefits are more fit
to

to be rejoiced in, than all worldly good. If he does not actually rejoice in him, this is not owing to a low opinion of Christ, but of himself. And that is a very different thing from the temper of carnal minds. If his fears chill his joy, they do not abate his esteem. While he cannot take the comfort of relation, yet it is the sense of his soul, "Happy is the people
 " that is in such a case; I had rather be in
 " their condition, the condition of the mean-
 " est that belong to Christ, than change states
 " with the most prosperous sinner upon earth.
 " It would fill me with more joy to have my
 " doubts scattered, and to be well assured that
 " Christ is mine, and I am his, than to have
 " the highest certainty of the most advanta-
 " geous friendship amongst men, or of the
 " possession of the richest inheritance in the
 " world." Now this is as truly rejoicing in Christ, as far as the apprehension of his own present circumstances will allow, as the highest transports of an assured soul.

Accordingly, with all his fears and doubts, he relies upon Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, and ventures the weight of his salvation upon him. He dares not fly to any other refuge, or take up with any other method of life; but here he casts anchor, living and dying, as the only name under heaven whereby men may be saved. He *trusts in Christ*, Eph. i. 12. It is indeed with a trembling heart, lest he should not be found one who has a right by the Gos-
 pel-

pel-declaration to lay claim to his benefits. But the distrust he hath is of himself, rather than of Christ. The measure of confidence he entertains, is in the sufficiency of Christ; and it is such a confidence, as he dares to place in no other. Now though this may not bring him to a full rest of mind, yet it is all the rest he hath for his salvation.

When we cannot rejoice in Christ as actually his, yet he would not quit his general hope upon any terms. When he is most jealous of himself, and fearful of his interest; should he be tried with the strongest allurements or the most affrighting terrors to deny Christ, to abandon any farther hope from him, or concern with him, he would shew his superior esteem for him by a resolute adherence. Many desponding Christians, as they have acquitted themselves well in such trials, so they have been enabled by that means to discern the place their master had in their hearts, beyond what they could ever do before, and so to strengthen their hopes, and rise up to a more comfortable joy in him. They have shewn the world, and themselves at the same time, the sincerity of their affection, when they are content to forego any worldly good, or suffer any temporal inconvenience, upon trial, rather than break with Christ.

We may make the following reflections upon this subject.

I. The

1. The christian religion is certainly a doctrine worthy of all acceptation; for it contains glad tidings of great joy: and who is not willing to entertain such a message? It opens a door for joy to creatures in the most deplorable condition, who by sin had the most dismal prospect; such, upon which *Adam* endeavoured to *hide himself from the presence of the Lord*; such as would otherwise imbitter every hour of life to a convinced mind, and overspread the face of death with blackness of darkness. Instead of that, the Gospel sets in view, for every returning sinner, the favour of an offended God, the fullness of the promises; all that is necessary to make him safe by the way, and happy at the end of it, as freely given him in and with Christ. The *Gospel*, agreeable to it's name, contains no other than *good tidings* to those who give it a proper reception; the declarations of terror made in it shall reach only to those who reject or neglect the salvation offered by Christ.

2. We may infer the folly of suffering our selves to be mainly taken up with worldly joy, when we may have so much better. It is a most reasonable exhortation, which the prophet uses with sinners, upon a prediction of the grace of the Gospel, *Isa. lv. 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* when you may have so much better. *As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter*

laughter of fools, Eccl. vii. 6. The carnal joy of sinners is a blaze, and no more ; it soon leaves them as it found them, if no worse. *I said*, says the Wiseman, *of laughter, it is mad* ; but a short fit of madness ; *and of mirth, what doth it ?* Eccl. ii. 2. Forbidden delights leave a sting behind them, in remorse of conscience : to rejoice or glory in them, is to *glory in our shame*, in that *of which we* our selves shall certainly sooner or later *be ashamed*. But to rejoice in Christ Jesus, is to take pleasure in the most valuable object, in the most complete spring of happiness, in the best treasure ; in that which is sufficient to support under all other uneasinesses, and in the most distressing hours : it is a joy full of glory, and to be perfected in glory.

3. Let all those therefore who have heard the Gospel-message hitherto with negligence and contempt, be persuaded to consider the blessedness it contains, and to give it a suitable entertainment. Think seriously, what a mournful condition you are in without Christ : in a state of enmity with your Creator, under his wrath and curse, liable every moment to death, and to hell after it. Can joy in such circumstances be wiser or better than the drunken revels of a condemned malefactor ? Think how suitable to your case and wants the discovery is, which the Gospel makes of a Saviour : it is just such as a convinced sinner would reasonably desire ; only it far exceeds what the heart of man could conceive. Consider how wil-
ling

ing he is to perform the kind office of a Saviour to you; the abasement and sorrows he cheerfully underwent to capacitate him for it; the breathings of his good-will to sinners in the gracious words that proceeded out of his lips, in the many invitations to them which are left upon record, in his instituting a ministry of reconciliation, to beseech you in his stead to be reconciled to God. Think, what benefits await you, as soon as you receive him: you will be justified by faith, and have peace with God; be admitted among his children, be intituled to his promises, and become heirs of his kingdom. But on the other hand, your sorrows must be far more extreme, if you should finally reject him, after he is discovered to you. God hath a sorer punishment in store for such, and your own consciences will produce weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Lay such thoughts as these, O sinner, to heart, and pray in earnest for his effectual grace to dispose you to a willing compliance with the call of the Gospel.

4. Let Christians endeavour to rise up to the height of this character, of rejoicing in Christ. To that end,

Use diligence to improve and confirm your faith in the Gospel-testimony; that you may be the better able to say with *Peter*, John vi. 69. *We believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* Your joy cannot rise beyond the proportion of faith.

There-

Therefore frequently review the various evidences of the truth and divine original of the Gospel-revelation; and along with it pray to God to increase your faith, *Luke xvii. 5.*

Do your utmost to clear your own interest in him. Carefully inform yourselves of the tenor of the Gospel-constitution, that you may not wrongfully exclude yourselves from the comfort of a covenant-relation. Let the uniting acts of faith in him, and love to him, have a frequent and lively exercise. And especially cultivate his image and resemblance both in heart and life.

Hereupon set yourselves often to meditate on the Gospel-discovery concerning him. *Consider the apostle and high-priest of your profession, Christ Jesus, Heb. iii. 1.* If you make him and his grace familiar, and frequently present to your thoughts, it will make joy spring up in your hearts, and keep it fresh and lively.

Let the work of thanksgiving for Christ and his benefits be your daily exercise. This will keep your souls in a chearful frame.

Aim at having this for your prevailing and habitual temper. *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice, Phil. iv. 4.* Recollect the grace of Christ for your support in every uneasy circumstance of life. When you are lamenting the body of death, turn your thoughts hither, with *Paul, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vii. 24, 25.* “Blessed be God, that through Christ it

“ shall not issue in my condemnation, as long
“ as it hath not the dominion ; that by his
“ grace it is become my burden ; and that be-
“ fore he has done with me, I shall be deli-
“ vered from it.” In the troubles of life,
think, blessed be God, these *shall not separate me from the love of Christ.* Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors, thro’ him that loved us. If death looks formidable, eye Christ as having by his own death frustrated him who had the power of death ; and say, *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Endeavour to have joy in Christ as your governing disposition and principle in the performance of every duty, and in your whole course of christian obedience.

Finally, endeavour to shew the world about you, how you rejoice in him. By your stedfastness to him, in opposition to all inducements to unfaithfulness. And by a chearful demeanor strive to convince those who observe you, that you find his ways to be ways of pleasantness, and his paths paths of peace.

S E R M O N XIII.

Being filled with the Spirit.

E P H. v. 18. the latter part.

—*Be filled with the Spirit.*

THE right disposition of our souls to God, which hath been insisted on already, concerns all the sacred Three in common; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But the Gospel represents each of them, as sustaining different parts of the work of saving lost sinners; and accordingly directs us to distinct practical regards to each. We are taught on the one hand to have *access to the Father, thro' the Son, and by the Spirit*; and on the other, to expect all benefits from the Father, thro' the Son, and by the Spirit.

I have already discoursed of the christian frame towards the Lord Jesus, or to the Son as Mediator; and would now shew, how christianity requires us to be disposed with reference to the blessed Spirit, according to

the account given us in Scripture of his peculiar province; and have chosen to make this passage my foundation.

The precept in the text stands connected with several practical exhortations laid down in this and the *fourth* chapters; and is directly opposed to a caution given in the beginning of the verse. *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess: but be filled with the Spirit.*

Intemperance greatly prevailed in the heathen world; and even in some of the feasts of their Gods, particularly in the feast of *Bacchus*, wherein it was commonly esteemed not only lawful, but commendable, to indulge to gluttony and drunkenness. The converts at *Ephesus* saw this practice among their neighbours, and possibly might formerly be themselves associates in it; and therefore the apostle warns them against their old sins, and enforces the caution by putting them in mind of the farther bad effects which used to follow intemperance. *Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess.* The word *ἀσωτία* signifies *dissoluteness*, all manner of impurities. These were used to follow the heathen excesses in their festivals, as they are too often the attendants of intemperance in common life. Now in opposition to this, the apostle exhorts Christians to *be filled with the Spirit*. Instead of the jollitry and criminal pleasures, which sensual men are led to by the unrestrained

strained indulgence of their appetites; you Christians should aim at the sacred and solid pleasure which is to be had by means of the Holy Spirit.

This exhortation is addressed to those who were supposed to be already Christians, and consequently to *have the Spirit of Christ* in some measure; and therefore must directly mean, that they should aim at a participation of him in a larger and fuller measure. But yet, as it is directed to the professors of christianity at *Ephesus* promiscuously, who for ought that any but God and themselves knew, might some of them be still destitute of the renewing influences of the Spirit; so the exhortation may reasonably be taken in such a latitude, as to excite all who name the name of Christ, to labour after a farther participation of the Spirit than they have already, according as their present state is; either to *begin* or to *perform a good work* in them. Those who are not yet made truly good by him, tho' it is not the *immediate* concern incumbent upon them to be *filled* with the Spirit, yet they are remotely obliged even to that; and in order to it, to take the necessary proceeding steps.

I shall then discourse of this proposition,

That we are called by christianity to be filled with the Spirit.

In the prosecution of which, I shall consider,

I. The meaning of this phrase, of *being filled with the Spirit*. Which will be some account of what the Gospel reveals concerning the province of the Spirit in the work of our salvation; and so will shew the foundation of the temper required toward him.

II. What is implied in this being made a matter of exhortation to us. Which will lead me directly to explain the disposition required by christianity in relation to the Spirit.

III. The obligations which lie upon all who profess christianity to be filled with the Spirit.

I. I am to consider the meaning of this phrase, *being filled with the Spirit*. Wherein two things are to be distinctly explained: *the Spirit*; and then *being filled with the Spirit*.

First, What are we to understand by *the Spirit*, with which we are to be filled? The observation of three things may give sufficient light upon this head.

I. That divine Person, the *third* of the sacred Three, is plainly intended. He, in whose name we are baptized, as well as the Father and Son. He is sometimes described in Scripture by additional characters; as *the Holy Spirit*, or *Holy Ghost*; *the eternal Spirit*, Heb. ix. 14. *The Spirit of God*; and *the Spirit of Christ*, as he was purchased and sent by Christ

Christ to bear the part he sustains in the work of our salvation. *If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ*, Rom. viii. 9. *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son*, Gal. iv. 6. And frequently, as in the text, he is called absolutely and in a way of emphasis, by the name of the *Spirit*, without any addition, in places too numerous to need reciting. And that he is meant in this exhortation, may appear from a parallel phrase, which is frequently used concerning some in the New Testament, that they were *full of the Holy Ghost*, or *Spirit*: which is said of Christ himself, *Luke* iv. 1. And of *Stephen*, *Acts* vi. 5. chap. vii. 55. And of *Barnabas*, *Acts* xi. 24. Now we shall most reasonably understand the apostle here to exhort Christians to be filled with the same Spirit, which those persons are declared to be full of.

2. The gracious influences and operations of this blessed agent upon our minds, in order to our holiness and happiness, are that participation of the Spirit, which we are to seek after.

It is not his bare essential presence with us. So he necessarily is every where; he filleth heaven and earth. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?* *Psal.* cxxxix. 7. Tho' by the way, I cannot see how all Christians thro' the world could be directed to expect his influences, without supposing him to be possessed of that divine perfection of omnipresence. I can by

no means apprehend it possible, that a finite being should have access at once to all minds.

Nor are his extraordinary influences and operations in miraculous gifts the things intended. He acted as a Spirit of prophecy under the Old Testament. *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,* 2 Pet. i. 21. *The Spirit of Christ was in them, testifying the things which they delivered,* 1 Pet. i. 11. And in the primitive age of the christian church, his extraordinary influences in various kinds were very extensive and surprising. *God revealed the things, which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had entered into the heart of man, by his Spirit,* to the apostles and first publishers of the Gospel, and enabled them infallibly to make them known to the world, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. He immediately endowed them with supernatural qualifications for the services to which they were called, so that their enemies were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which they spake, Acts vi. 10. He gave miraculous attestations to the truth of christianity, by the gift of tongues, and by many other signs and wonders.

These were peculiar to that first age, and necessary to lay the foundations of the christian church; but not designed or needful to be continued in after-times. The revelation of God's will was then completed, so as neither

ther to need nor admit of any addition, *Rev.* xxii. 18. and sufficient attestations were then given to the truth of the Gospel in the first age, and sufficient provision made for conveying the notice of them down to all after-ages in an ordinary way; so that nothing more of this kind is to be expected, as far as I can perceive, from the Gospel.

All these influences of the Spirit were more directly intended for the good of others, than of the persons themselves who partook of them. Indeed in those days, while such extraordinary gifts were dispensed, the apostle exhorted Christians to desire a share in them, in order to their greater usefulness, *1 Cor.* xii. 31. *Covet earnestly the best gifts.* But even then he directed them to the gracious influences of the Spirit, as much more valuable: *And yet,* says he, *shew I unto you a more excellent way.* What that more excellent way was, he immediately lets them know in the next chapter; namely, the holy dispositions which the Spirit produces by his sanctifying grace; one of which he singles out suitable to his present occasion, *charity.* And he gives a very plain reason for this preference; because the most excellent gifts of the Spirit might be without his grace; and if they were so separated, they would not turn to their final account. If a man *could speak with the tongue of men and of angels; if he had the gift of prophecy, and understood*

stood all mysteries and all knowledge, and had all faith, i. e. to work miracles; this might be without charity, or the other graces of the Spirit: and if so, a man would be nothing after all; or if any thing, only as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. If he was enabled by such gifts to be pleasing or profitable to others; yet whatever agreeable sound he might make in their ears, he would have no more share in relishing the harmony, than a musical instrument hath.

Such gifts may aggravate mens condemnation, but can never of themselves bring them to heaven. The apostle seems to speak mainly of the participation of these extraordinary gifts, when he says, *Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. It is impossible for those, who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; i. e. as I think, the miraculous powers displayed in the evangelical state, which the same apostle declares to be the world to come; whereof he spake, chap. ii. 7. If these, says he, shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.* It was next to impossible, that is, extremely difficult, to recover such, if they should become apostates, because they had had such evidences for christianity already, as could hardly be out-done; and

Serm. xiii. *Be filled with the Spirit.* 267
and yet they might leave their hearts un-
changed.

These things therefore were not the operations of the Spirit, which were most valuable *then* : but his direct agency as a Spirit of holiness. And it was plainly the apostle's intention in the text to direct the *Ephesians* to this latter kind of his influences ; if we consider what effect he intimates their being filled with the Spirit would have upon them, in the words following the text. *Be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to your selves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs ; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord : giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ : submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God, ver. 19, 20, 21.* which is in effect to say, “ Be filled with the
“ Spirit, that so you may be disposed to all the
“ acts of devotion toward God, and to per-
“ form them in a spiritual manner, as unto
“ God ; and that you may be formed also to
“ behave aright towards men.” Now they would be furnish'd for these things by the sanctifying influences, not by the gifts of the Spirit. And therefore the apostle must be understood of the former.

These operations were necessary to any spiritual good in fallen creatures from the beginning. We find some promises of them under the Old Testament, and good men then
sometimes

sometimes expressly praying for them; but they were reserved for a fuller discovery under the New. When Christ engaged in his publick ministry, he directed the eyes of his followers to the blessed Spirit as the fountain of spiritual good, and encouraged them to hope and ask for his grace from their heavenly Father, *Luke xi. 13.* And as his gracious agency will be still needed for the same purposes to the end of time, we should still have a constant eye to it.

3. The genuine fruits which the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit tend to produce in us, must also be taken in, as a part of the object of pursuit here recommended to us; and indeed as that for the sake of which his influences are to be desired. All his gracious operations tend to make us like God, and happy in God; they have that effect, as far as they are complied with, and they are only desirable in order to that; and as far as any fallen creatures arrive at true holiness, or well-grounded comfort, they owe it principally to his having been at work in them. Hence the new nature in us, or a holy and heavenly disposition, is often called in Scripture *the Spirit*; not only because such a temper is more suitable to the nobler part of ourselves, our souls; but also because it is the effect of the agency of the blessed Spirit of God. The words of the text, *πληρωσθε ἐν πνεύματι*, may as properly be rendered, *Be filled BY OR THRO' the Spirit,*

Spirit, as, *be filled WITH him*. As if it was said, be filled *by means of* the Spirit; not directly specifying *with what*, and yet sufficiently intimating that: be filled with that, with which the good Spirit of God is used to fill souls. And what should that be, but his own fruits? Now *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and the like, Gal. v. 22, 23.* Or, as in *Eph. v. 9. The fruit of the Spirit is in, all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.* To be filled with the Spirit then, and to be filled with all holy qualities and well-grounded consolations thereupon, are one and the same thing.

Having thus stated the meaning of *the Spirit*, I proceed to consider,

Secondly, What is implied by our *being filled* with the Spirit. And it imports both a greatness in his agency, and a largeness in our participation.

1. It supposes a sufficiency and fulness in the blessed Spirit and his influences, every way to fill our souls; to supply all our spiritual wants, and to help all our infirmities.

Not that we are to expect from him the discovery of any new truths distinct from those which he has already revealed in the Scriptures. He promised indeed to *guide* the apostles *into all truths*; even such truths as were not before revealed, the *many things* which *Christ had to say to them, but they could not bear till*
after

after his ascension, *John* xvi. 12, 13. But this was a promise peculiar to them; and fully accomplished, before the canon of Scripture was completed. Nor does he move men to any thing as their duty, which was not already made so by the word of God. His agency is only to be considered, as in a way of powerful assistance to the due consideration, apprehension and belief of the mind of God as already revealed in Scripture. We have no other way to distinguish his influences from delusion of fancy, or the irregular inclinations of our own hearts, or the suggestions of the Devil, but by trying their agreement with the revelation already made of truth and duty. Every good thought is of God, *2 Cor.* iii. 5. Every motion to that which is good, we justly conceive to be from the Spirit. But every thought, every motion, which varies from the rule of goodness, or cannot be supported by clear reason or revelation, must necessarily proceed from another original. The Spirit's agency is always agreeable to his word, and by his word.

Nor are we to apprehend his influence to be perceivable by it self; but we know it to be from him purely by revelation. We believe his agency in all the good we find in our selves, because the Scripture ascribes it to him. He works upon us, in and by the natural actings of our own minds, and usually in a very familiar way; so that we should not be able to distinguish

distinguish his agency from our own, if we were not assured by revelation, from whom every good motion in fallen creatures hath its rise; that *every good and perfect gift comes from above*, Jam. i. 17. and all good things in the sphere of grace by the Spirit. Therefore the two evangelists, *Matthew* and *Luke*, make these two expressions to be of the like import, *Our heavenly Father's giving us such good things*, and his *giving us his Holy Spirit*, *Matth.* vii. 11. compared with *Luke* xi. 13. because he gives us all such good things by his Spirit. But his acting is in a way so connatural to the actings of our own faculties, that we should not be able merely by feeling to discern from whence it came, or that it had any other rise than from our own spirits, if the Scripture did not point us to the Spirit of all grace as the fountain of it. This seems to be Christ's meaning, when he represents to *Nicodemus* the operations of the Spirit by an allusion to the wind, *John* iii. 8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* He acts really and powerfully upon the minds of men, and they are conscious of the good motion, but could not of themselves know the original of it.

But though his agency is always suitable to the rational nature he has given us; yet it is of that general extent through all our faculties,
and

and of that powerful and sufficient influence, that it is every way fit to relieve us under all inward necessities and weaknesses which attend us in our fallen state, and against all the outward snares, oppositions and discouragements we can meet with in the way to heaven. It is sufficient to recover a dead sinner to life; to enable a Christian to do or to bear all things, to which he is called; in a word, to begin and to perform a good work in him to the day of Christ.

He is called in general *the Spirit of grace*, Zech. xii. 10. Heb. x. 29. The person promised and eminently communicated under the Gospel, to apply the fruits of divine grace to men. There is scarce any want of considerable importance to our spiritual interests, wherein we do not find particular mention of his agency in Scripture. He is moving many ways in the minds of sinners, while they remain estranged from God, to restrain them from evil, and to make way for saving good; which may be intended by his *striving* with them, Gen. vi. 3. The Gospel, where it comes, is more or less to all, a *ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. He is the author of regeneration, John iii. 5, 6. And he has made signal examples of such a change in the greatest sinners, Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5. 1 Cor. vi. 11. He has washed *Ethiopians* white. His operations for producing sanctification in general, both in the beginning and progress of it; and his influence
upon

upon the several graces and virtues in particular, of which sanctification consists, are often mentioned. His gracious aids in religious exercises, his reasonable *supplies* in our various exigencies, *Rom. viii. 26, 27. Phil. i. 19.* He is also stiled *the Comforter*; and many ways are expressed, whereby he is so to particular Christians: By *witnessing with their spirits, that they are the Children of God, Rom. viii. 16. Enabling them to cry, Abba, Father, Gal 4. 6. Sealing them to the day of redemption, Eph. iv. 30. Shedding abroad God's love in their hearts. 2 Cor. v. 5. Enabling them to wait for the hope of righteousness through faith, Gal. v. 5.* And granting them suitable supports under their sufferings, *1 Pet. iv. 14.*

If after all, these things should not comprehend every spiritual good desirable, yet we may extend our view to all that God has promised, and expect it to be communicated by the Holy Spirit. For it is by him alone that we can be *filled with all the fulness of God* that is communicable to us, *Eph. iii. 19.*

Whatever spiritual blessings we find prayed for in Scripture to Christians in ordinary cases, were actually to be given by the Spirit, tho' he should not be particularly mentioned in the prayer. And in the way of duty, according to our wants, we may expect the like.

Finally, whatever is needful for us in every case and circumstance, to furnish us for any service, or trial, or conflict appointed us, the Spirit

hath it to give, and we are encouraged to ask it from our heavenly Father. There is therefore a fulness in him every way sufficient to fill our souls, which is supposed in the phrase of our *being filled with him*.

2. It imports an actual participation of his influences and fruits, in a large and plentiful measure.

It does not imply an absolute and perfect fulness. No mere man was ever so filled with the Holy Ghost; though to Christ, who was more than man, *God gave the Spirit without measure*, John iii. 34. But we must understand it in a way accommodate to a state of imperfection; as *Dorcas* is said to have been *full of good works*, Acts ix. 36. not as if she was complete in them, but she had performed many, and was conspicuous for them: or as the heathen world are declared to have been *filled with all unrighteousness*, Rom. i. 29. not as full of sin as it was possible for them to be; nor that every one included under that character, was equally vile: but as the worst of them might possibly still be worse, so some among them were worse than others. Thus, being filled with the Spirit, neither bespeaks so full a participation of him, as admits of no increase; nor excludes all from having this pronounced of them in a Gospel sense, who yet may be outstripped by some other Christians.

But this may be more or less mens character in the following respects. (1.) As

(1.) As they come to have *every power and faculty* of their souls more subject to the Spirit's authority, and under the influence proper to it. As the light of the Gospel by his means shines more strongly upon their minds, and at the same time his powerful grace makes them more willing and obedient, and the representation he makes of the great things of the Gospel more powerfully attracts their affections, and in like manner every other power receives the just impress from his influence, like the wax from the seal. A man may proportionably be said to be full of the Spirit, as that character comes to be true of him, that *all things are become new in him*, 2 Cor. v. 17. when, according to the apostle's prayer for the *Thessalonians*, 1 Epist. v. 23. *The very God of peace sanctifies him wholly, in his whole spirit, and soul, and body.*

(2.) As they grow on to experience his operations *in all the several kinds* of them. Not only one or another particular method of his operation, but all the sorts of gracious influence, for which he is promised and given to Christians. Men advance nearer towards being filled with the Spirit, when they partake of his special, as well as his common grace; when they find him enlightening them in their darkness, and quickening them in their remissness, and pushing them forward to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to add one virtue or one branch

of the christian temper to another; when they come to experience his lively energy, leading them on both to holiness and to comfort also.

(3.) As his agency comes to be more *stated and constant* in them. When his motions are not only transient and occasional, but frequent and fixed. This is imported by a phrase often used, of the Spirit's *dwelling* in us, *Rom. viii. 9. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.* And in ver. 11. the phrase is repeated. So, *1 Cor. iii. 16. Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* In this respect Christians are said to be *built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*, *Eph. ii. 22.* These phrases are a plain allusion to God's presence among his antient people the *Jews* by the constant abode of the *Shechinah*, or the glorious symbol of his presence in the most holy place within the veil of the tabernacle and temple. That was a standing pledge of his favour towards them as his peculiar people, of his dwelling with them, as always ready to bestow on them the blessings they needed, to defend them from their enemies, and to accept their offerings. But even under that dispensation God promised to dwell also with particular good men, *Isa. lvii. 15. I dwell in the high and holy places; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,*

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spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. This was a promise of his constant presence with particular persons, and that for spiritual purposes. In the New Testament he is represented as thus dwelling with every good man by his Spirit; which imports a *continued* presence of his grace, whereby we are constantly put into a capacity for *mortifying the deeds of the body*; as it follows in the 13th verse of the 8th to the *Romans*; wherein, as I observed, the Spirit is spoken of in the 9th and 11th verses, as *dwelling* in believers. Now, tho' this is the common privilege of all true Christians, in comparison of those who are not yet become obedient to the faith; yet his dwelling in them admits of degrees: his gracious influences are more constant and uninterrupted in some than in others; for they may in part be withheld or suspended upon provocation. And men may be said to be more or less filled with the Spirit, as his motions in their souls are more or less constant, for exciting them to good, and to the mortification of sin.

(4.) As his grace becomes more *mighty* and *operative* in them, so as actually to produce its proper and genuine effects. The more his operations reach their end in us, in forming holy dispositions of soul, and shining out in their visible efficacy in the life; the more we *purify our souls in obeying the truth*

by the Spirit, 1 Pet. i. 22. so much the higher advance is made towards a fulness of the Spirit. And this may be said of men, either in respect of their growth in some particular graces and virtues, or in respect of the variety of his fruits appearing in them.

Men may approach towards a fulness of the Spirit more than formerly, as *any particular grace or virtue gathers strength* in them, and appears in more frequent and conspicuous exercise. If they become *strong in Faith*, or (as the apostle thanks God in the case of the *Thessalonians*) *their faith groweth exceedingly, and their charity towards each other aboundeth*, 2 Theff. i. 3. If a man, who once struggled hard with his tumultuous passions, or unruly appetites, and was sometimes led captive by them, becomes a signal conqueror, eminently meek and mortified. When a man hath not only the grace of patience ordinarily prevailing, tho' too often breaking out in expressions of impatience; but *patience hath its perfect work*. The apostle exhorts to that, with this addition, *that ye may be perfect, and entire, wanting nothing*, James i. 4. To have such a measure of that blessed temper, as comes up to a fulness of it; such as is ready for exercise in every trial of patience, and to express itself in all the proper marks of patience. As far as this is attained, so far there is a fulness of the Spirit in respect of that grace. And the same is to be said of any other particular virtue. But

But a fulness of the Spirit most eminently denotes the *variety of his fruits* appearing in men. When they *add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge, &c.* 2 Pet i. 5, &c. When their tempers are prevailingly formed to every holy disposition, and their lives *filled with the fruits of righteousness*, Phil. i. 22. St. Pauls tells the *Corinthians*, 2 Cor. ix. 8. *God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.* Glorious proficients they are, who out of the abundant fulness of God have derived such a sufficiency as the apostle speaks of, and thereupon abound in such things as divine grace has made them sufficient for: *Who being filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good word:—* *Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness*, Col. i. 9, 10, 11. When they are called out to special duties and services, they shew that they have their *band filled* for those services (as the phrase is in the margin of *Exod. xxviii. 41.*) by their readiness to engage in them, and their performance of them to the glory of God. They honour their teacher and guide, and the fountain of their supplies, by a becoming behaviour thro' changing conditions and circumstances

stances of life. *St. Paul* had such a blessed furniture, *Phil.* iv. 12, 13. *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need: I can do all things thro' Christ who strengthneth me.* Happy souls, who are thus filled!

(5.) As they taste such a sweetness and delight in the measure of participation attained, that they reach forward with the greater ardor toward perfection. This is a sign indeed that their fulness is not complete; but it is one of the best signs of growing approaches toward the fulness attainable on earth. The larger share saints below have of the influences, and graces, and comforts of the Spirit, they have the quicker sight of remaining defects; and, instead of being at full rest, they are the more eager in desires and pursuits after more. It was a sure mark of uncommon attainments in blessed *Paul*, when *this one thing he did, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,* *Phil.* iii. 13, 14.

A reflection or two may be made on this subject, as far as we have proceeded.

I. We see the excellence of the Gospel-revelation, in proposing so suitable and sufficient relief for the necessities of fallen creatures,

tures. The most distinguishing glory of the Gospel lies in the discovery it makes of a better way for fallen sinners to come to God, than was fully made known before ; and that upon a double foot : upon the foundation of a better atonement, the precious blood of Christ ; and by such gracious influences of the Spirit, as were neither so clearly revealed, nor so plentifully communicated before.

2. We have here one instance wherein christianity leads us to live by faith, and not by sight. The God with whom we have to do, is himself among the invisibles : the Mediator through whom we come to him, is now so too : and the blessed Spirit, who is the principle of all that is good in us, is not only an invisible agent, but his agency is it self intirely a matter of faith ; and the world he is training us up for, is out of sight also.

3. That which hath been shewn from Scripture, both of the suitableness of the Spirit's operations to our wants, and of the blessed effects of them, may be hoped to excite some desires in every breast after a share : especially since this Gospel which is preach'd to you is a ministration of the Spirit ; and by this way of representing his grace he is used to kindle such desires in the minds of men, which he delights to satisfy. But more of this in the next discourse.

S E R M O N XIV.

Being filled with the Spirit.

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— *Be filled with the Spirit.*

IN the prosecution of this subject, I have already considered the sense and import of the phrase, *being filled with the Spirit.* I now proceed,

II. To enquire what may be implied in its being made the matter of an exhortation to us, as by the structure of the words and the context you plainly see it is. And in that view, the words plainly intimate *three* things, which all deserve a distinct and careful consideration: the *desirableness* of being filled with the Spirit; the *attainableness* of it; and that something is *incumbent on us* in order to our being filled with him.

First, That every one should esteem it a most *desirable* thing. So the apostle recommends it, in opposition to what the loose and
libertine

libertine heathens were exceeding fond of, the mirth and jollitry raised by wine. But while *they think it strange, that you run not with them into the same excess of riot*, you know the way to much better and truer satisfaction. A fulness of the divine Spirit is a blessing of that unspeakable goodness and excellence, that one would think the bare knowledge and consideration of it should raise in every breast ardent desires after it. And it is as undoubted a mark, as any other, of the general distemper which hath overspread human nature, and that the taste and relish of men is strangely vitiated; that wherever the Gospel comes, and makes known the influences of the Spirit for such beneficial purposes, any should be found insensible of their need of them, and of the blessedness of being filled with them. Let us take a brief view of its excellence.

It is in itself most directly *perfective of our natures*: For it is to be filled with every grace and virtue; and indeed is the only way by which we can possibly be so, since the distemper and death of sin has gained such a power over us by the apostacy. As far as we are partakers of the Spirit, and no farther, *we come to ourselves.*

This would make us the *objects of divine complacency*. There is nothing in man in which a holy God can take so much delight, as the produce of his own Spirit in him. That must be godlike, comporting with his
nature

nature and design. And therefore he who shares most largely in that, must be in the most eminent sense *greatly beloved*; as is said of *Daniel*.

Nothing can form men to a *fitness for bringing much honour to God*, or for being singularly useful to the world, especially to the interests of virtue and religion, but this. We shall never design great things for God or our generation, much less execute them well, unless we are under the influence of a better spirit than our own. But under the instigation, direction and powerful assistance of the divine Spirit, we shall be *able* and ready to do all things which we are called to; *The weak will be as David, and David as an angel of the Lord.*

This would make us *proof against the most powerful temptations*, If we are *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, which is communicated to us by the grace of the Spirit; we shall be *able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*, Eph. vi. 10, 13. All the terrors of life will be little things to a man full of the Holy Ghost; as was plainly seen in *Stephen's* case, and in many of the noble army of martyrs. *Satan* will gain little advantage by all his vigilance and subtilty, where the all-wise and gracious Spirit is present as a constant monitor, and where a soul is ready to listen to his counter-motions. And the allurements which appear
strong

strong to a carnal mind from the pleasures of sin, will soon lose all its power in a man, when the divine Spirit is freely allowed to represent the motives of the Gospel to the mind with his own light and energy.

This would *put us into a fit posture of soul for daily communion with God.* Under the Spirit's lively agency, every institution of divine worship would be attended on with pleasure and delight; we should engage in it in the most spiritual frame, and every pious disposition suitable to it would be in a ready and a lively exercise. When this *wind blows upon the garden, the spices thereof will flow out;* and then *our beloved will come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits,* Cant. iv. 16.

This would *settle our souls in the truest pleasure and peace.* If we partake of a large measure of the Spirit's graces, we shall hardly fail of a liberal share in his consolations. The more we *walk in the fear of the Lord,* the more we may expect to *walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost;* as both were united in the case of the primitive churches, *Acts ix. 31.* By this means, in tribulation, in distress, in peril, in famine, in nakedness, we shall *have meat to eat which the world knows not of;* and be able to *joy in the Lord, though the fig-tree doth not blossom,* Habak. iii. 17, 18.

Finally, this is no less than *heaven begun;* heaven brought down into the soul, in title, in meetness, in chearful prospects, in refreshing fore-

foretastes. A man who is full of the Spirit, hath *the earnest of the inheritance*, Eph. i. 14.

And is not this a most desirable good? What can justly claim an equal share in your esteem and value?

Is not this better than the filling of your treasures on earth; to be *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*? You may have your barns and your chests full, and yet your souls intirely empty; empty of their proper ornament, and of any stable satisfaction. You may soon have your stores of worldly treasure emptied by a thousand accidents; and then, if you have not the Spirit of God, you must be forced to say, *My Gods are taken away, and what have I more?* But for certain, one stroke of death will strip you of all at once; none of the furniture of worldly good can be carried along with you into the other world: and in what a destitute case must the separate soul be, when it hath dropped the body and all the enjoyments suitable to that, and never was possessed of the happiness proper to itself?

Are sensual delights preferred by you before such a blessing as being filled with the Spirit? Intemperance, and the criminal indulgences of the flesh? Do you take pleasure in *being filled with wine, wherein is excess*, and all manner of looseness? But do you consider, that hereby you are filled with guilt, with shame, with folly? That the
Devil

Devil and his train take possession, when you give up yourselves to rioting and drunkenness, to chambering and wantonness? Do you remember, that by these things people commonly are filled with distempers, with poverty, with various miseries in this life? and above all, that in the end, without bitter repentance, you can look for no better from such a course, than to be *filled with your own ways*? And what is the satisfaction for which you run all these risques? How very short the pleasure of a licentious revel! how quickly is it succeeded with a grating remorse for your folly, if not for your sin! Must you not say of the *laughter*, which springs from the fumes of wine, *it is mad*? And of that *mirth*, what doth it? Eccl. ii. 2. *Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine*, Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. How many who have given a loose to unbridled appetites, to work all uncleanness with greediness, have *mourned at the last*, *when their flesh and their body have been consumed*; and said, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!* Prov. v. 12. Had you been filled with the Spirit, you had kept at the remotest distance from all this.

But possibly some who have lived free from such enormities, and even have a detestation

tation of them, yet find little relish for that which I am recommending, though they are raised vastly above the sensualist. They have a lively taste for some entertainments of the mind, and are eager to be filled with many parts of knowledge, which are useful in their kind. They are insatiable in pursuit of learning, can travel the globe and not be weary; employ wakeful nights in surveying the heavens, search indefatigably into the nature of things about them, look with the strictest scrutiny into the history of antient and modern times, and traverse the whole field of arts and sciences with a continual thirst remaining. The generality of the world are far from being so well employed; a pleasure much more innocent and manly, springs from these improvements of knowledge, than from the luxury and licentiousness in which too many spend their time: and they may contribute, under the direction of piety and goodness, to make men eminently serviceable to their fellow-creatures. But after all, to be filled with the Spirit, excels the highest advances in learning, much more than they do the entertainments of sensual men.

All the learning in the world will not change the heart, or recommend a man to God, or secure his everlasting interest, or enable him to give up his account with joy. *Though* he should be able to *speak with all the tongues of men*, and *understood all know-*
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ledge in the full compass of it; yet *he is nothing* in the account of God, and in respect of the truest wisdom, without the grace of God.

Learning will not always dispose men to be useful, however it may improve their capacity. It often makes them proud and arrogant, and the more pernicious instruments in serving the Devil's kingdom. But the graces of the Spirit always makes men humble, and incline them to list their capacities, whether natural or acquired, whether greater or less, in the service of God and their generation.

The highest attainments we can arrive at in learning and speculative knowledge, can be of use to ourselves only upon earth. In the other world, *as for knowledge it shall vanish away*, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. So many uncertainties and mistakes attend us in a great part of that which is esteemed knowledge here, that if ever we come to see things in the perfect light of heaven, we shall be obliged to give up as falsehoods many curious speculations with which we entertained ourselves here. And if we miss of heaven, the pleasure we might take in such amusements will vanish away, and be succeeded by eternal regret, that we suffered ourselves, by too close an attendance to less necessary employments of thought, however innocent in themselves, to be diverted from minding our better and more important

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interests.

interests. But a participation of the Spirit qualifies for heaven, will be consummated in heaven ; and all knowledge, that can contribute to our happiness, along with it. If by the grace of God we arrive at that world of light, we shall find the faint, who was most illiterate on earth, to know more of all which is worth knowing, than the wisest philosopher could do below : and this without any laborious toil. We shall understand more above, of the wonders of nature and providence, as well as of the mystery of redemption, than we could reach here with the closest study and application.

To be filled with the Spirit then, deserves to be esteemed by us the most desirable good ; whether we consider it in itself, or compare it with the chief objects of pursuit, which men are aiming at according to their different tastes. But it may be said, Is not this a blessing too big for me to expect ? have I any just reason to hope, that a creature so mean, so corrupt as I am, should ever reach to such a height of honour and blessedness, as is included in being filled with the Spirit ? Yes, it is farther intimated in this exhortation being addressed to us,

Secondly, That we should look upon it as an *attainable* good. When the apostle directs this, as well as the other practical advices in the context, to the body of professed Christians ; it plainly bespeaks that which he

so recommends to be a thing which none of them should apprehend to be quite out of their reach, but a blessing to be come at. Those who were already by his grace prevailed upon to believe and obey the Gospel, should not esteem themselves stinted to the lower measure of the Spirit which they had received, or despair of coming up to be filled with him, in the Gospel-sense of the expression. And those who might yet be no more than professors of christianity at large, were allowed and obliged to believe it possible to obtain the Spirit, and even a plentiful participation of him, how unlike, how different soever they might find their present frame and temper from such an attainment. They lived under the Gospel, which made known to them the dispensation of the Spirit; and they heard such an exhortation directed to them as this in the text, without any exclusive distinction of themselves. No such address could reasonably be made to damned spirits, who are absolutely concluded in a remediless state; nor could it be directed to the body of the *Ephesian* professors at large, by a God who will not trifle with men, if it was as impracticable for any of them to obtain such a blessing, as for the fallen spirits. Now wherever the word of the Gospel comes, this exhortation should be attended to in the same latitude, as of general obligation, and general encouragement at

the same time. And to encourage you all to entertain hopes of this blessing as attainable, I would represent the foundations we have for such a hope.

1. From the Spirit's own gracious benignity, and his declared inclination to fill souls. We find not only the grace of the Father, and the grace of the Son, celebrated in the work of our salvation; but the grace of the Spirit also. The *Psalmist* fastens upon this character of him, as a plea for obtaining his conduct, *Psal.* cxliiii. 10. *Tby Spirit is good; lead me.* He is stiled the *Spirit of grace*; not only as he is the hand by which all grace is communicated to us, but as he is himself full of grace and benignity. His compassion to a lost and vitiated world induced him to come into the design of curing souls, and to bear a signal part in it himself. He hath published this to the world by the holy men of God whom he inspired, on purpose to excite the sons of men to employ him, and to admit his kind offices; that as they are sufficient to supply the wants of all, so all might have encouragement to put in for a share, according to his free and spreading benignity. He is never better pleased than when he is made use of; and from his kind propensions towards us, he is represented after the manner of men, as one *grieved*, when his influences are neglected or opposed, *Eph.* iv. 30.

2. From

2. From the purchase and intercession of Christ we may derive yet farther encouragement. Upon our forfeiture by sin, divine wisdom judged it proper, that tho' every benefit should be grace to us, yet it should be purchased by Christ for us; and the grace of the Spirit particularly among the rest, *Gal. iii. 13, 14. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us--- that we might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith.* This purchase of Christ gives a security to all who are already true believers, which they may plead with God for the continued influences of the spirit according to their wants in the christian life. And it looks with a kind aspect upon all at large who are planted in his vineyard, in the visible church, and not yet cut down. He intercedes on behalf of an unfruitful tree, *Luke xiii. 8, 9. for some farther time to dig about it and dung it, to cast farther manure about it, in order to its fruitfulness; tho' it is supposed, that after all this tree might be finally unfruitful, and so cut down at last.* The culture he designed it, we have no reason to understand merely of the outward ministration of the Gospel, but also of some kindly influences of the Spirit accompanying that ministration. This intercession of Christ was by way of office, as he was the dresser of the vineyard; and he carries his intercession no farther than his purchase will bear him out.

If then you should have reason to fear that your advantages in the vineyard have not hitherto been successful, to bring you heartily to obey the Gospel; yet here is encouragement to hope, that thro' the intercession of Christ, that culture may yet be had, which will be sufficient to enable you to bear genuine fruit; tho' you cannot tell when this reprieve and day of salvation will be out.

3. From the nature of the Spirit's work in consequence of redemption. The province of the Spirit towards men begins where Christ left off. His work is to apply what Christ purchased. Now the saving design on which Christ came, will not begin to take effect upon any particular souls without the Spirit's operation; nor yet will it be completed, till *Christ can present his church to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish*, Eph. v. 27. And certainly it is no small encouragement both to sinners and saints, that in their hope of his influences, they expect nothing from him but that which is his declared province; his powerful aids effectually to bring us to God, when we have thoughts of arising and returning to our Father, and then to lead us on toward perfection. This is the work for which we need him, and for which the Gospel directs our eye particularly to him. Now we should by no means despair of attaining that for which he is declared to be set up.

4. From

4. From the Gospel's being described as *the ministration of the Spirit*. So it is by the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 8. in opposition to the *Mosaical law*. That is called *the ministration of death*, ver. 7. because, tho' *written and engraven in stones*, so as to give a clear discovery of the will of God, yet it did not point to the grace of the spirit to enable men to perform it, nor was ordinarily attended with such a measure of his influences. But the Gospel is eminently *the ministration of the Spirit*. While it prescribes mens duty, it fully and frequently acquaints them with the provision made of the Spirit to capacitate them for it, as writing the law of God *in the fleshy tables of the heart*, ver. 3. And where it comes, the Spirit attends it: and while men are *beholding the glory of the Lord in this glass*, they are often *changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God*, ver. 18. When we are therefore under this Gospel, there is room to entertain hope that it may be an effectual ministration of the Spirit to us.

5. From the declarations of God concerning the Spirit.

There are many promises of his first saving operations which run in an absolute strain, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*

And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments. Jer. xxiv. 7. *I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.* Jer. xxxi. 33. *After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* And many other promises there are of the like tenor. These were directly delivered to the *Jews*, either after threatnings of their captivity, but before they were executed; or when they were actually in captivity: but the apostle proves in *Heb. viii.* from the words with which the last-mentioned promise in *Jeremiah* is introduced, that the promises of this sort were to have their main accomplishment in Gospel-times. These could not properly be said to be made to particular persons; for they are not described by names and characters, unless in one it is said to be a *covenant made with the house of Israel*, *Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. i. e.* the visible church. They are rather to be considered as divine declarations, deposited with his church in general, that he would make monuments of his efficacious grace. Now awakened sinners in the Gospel-state, to which state the apostle assures us that these promises principally belong, may justly take encouragement from such indeterminate promises. Is it no relief to hear that God is not only

only able, but resolved to give distinguishing grace to some apostate creatures? Though we should have no notice to whom, yet who would not hope and try? Especially as such declarations are only lodged with the visible church, who have the oracles of God among them, it gives them who are acquainted with this joyful sound, room for hope in this matter, far beyond what there can be for those who enjoy not the Gospel.

Other declarations of God seem to carry the matter farther. So *Prov. i. 23. Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.* The persons to whom these words of wisdom are directed, are plainly described to be unconverted sinners, and great sinners; as may be seen in the expostulation with them, in *ver. 22. How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?* This is followed with the call to them, *Turn at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you.* But how could they turn at the reproof, before the Spirit was poured out? I answer; the nature of the case necessarily obliges us to understand the *turning* to which they are exhorted, as something short of a thorough turn or conversion; some likely tendencies toward it, *framing their doings thitherwards.* And yet even that supposes that the Spirit was some way at work with them already by his com-
mon

mon grace, accompanying the exhortations of wisdom, striving with them. Without that, a fallen creature would not be capable of any tendencies toward conversion: But thereupon they are encouraged to hope for a farther and more liberal effusion of the Spirit.

Our Saviour's general declaration in *Luke xi. 13.* is yet farther encouraging; *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* the Father from heaven, the common Father. I cannot but apprehend this designed for encouragement to convinced sinners, as well as to real saints.

6. From the instances of his grace already made in others. Every convert in former ages and in the present, that comes to the notice of a sinner, is some encouragement to him to hope that his own recovery is practicable. The same power can effect it, the same grace can surmount all his unworthiness, and put him also among the children. And all those who have already shined as the excellent of the earth, eminent in grace, and full of the Holy Ghost, should not only shame Christians of lower attainments into emulation, but animate them in their aspirings after the greatest heights of grace and goodness. Some who were once *the chief of sinners*, blasphemers, persecutors, and injurious, yet by the grace of God mounted up to the first rank of saints

on

on earth; shone in every excellence, and laboured for God more abundantly than all about them: and others by the same grace may arrive at a like conspicuous change. Some, tho' but few, old sinners, and late converts, have far out-stripped those that were in Christ before them: therefore those who are called in late, should not despair of high advances. Some of very mean capacities in other respects, and of low circumstances in the world, yet have had their faces made to shine by eminent holiness; have made a visible proficiency in divine knowledge and in every virtue, and greatly adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour: therefore the weakest and the meanest Christians should not despair of eminent improvements and usefulness, if they put themselves under divine culture.

7. From the beginnings of his saving work in themselves, *good men* may conclude the greatest heights attainable by them, if they be not wanting to themselves. They may be confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 6. The change made in conversion may truly be said to be a greater instance of the power of the divine Spirit, than the finishing of such beginnings afterward. And it was a more illustrious proof of his grace, to undertake the cleansing of their impure souls, when sin had the dominion in them, than to proceed in carrying on

on his work, when he hath already made them partakers of a divine nature.

The *third* particular implied in the exhortation, *viz. That something is incumbent upon us in order to our being filled with the Spirit,* must be reserved to another discourse.

At present we may see, by way of reflection,

1. The inexcusableness of sinners if they still persist in their sins. If we had been condemned for our first apostacy, we must have been speechless; but we shall have far less excuse to make for ourselves, when the merits of a Saviour, and the grace of the Spirit, are revealed and offered to us.

2. That good men have constant reason highly to blame themselves for their small proficiencie and low attainments; when they have such a monitor, such a guide, such a fountain of all grace, not only revealed in general as attainable, but actually present with them, and dwelling in them. They should be deeply grieved themselves, if they so grieve the good Spirit of God.

S E R M O N XV.

Being filled with the Spirit.

E P H. v. 18. the latter part.

— *Be filled with the Spirit.*

I Came in my last discourse on these words to consider, *what may be implied in its being made the matter of an exhortation to us*, that we should be filled with the Spirit.

It plainly intimates,

First, The *desirableness* of it.

Secondly, The *attainableness* of it.

I now proceed to a *third thing* implied,

Thirdly, That *something is incumbent upon us, as our duty*, in order to our being filled with the Spirit. That it is a blessing attainable, but ordinarily in the use of means. God requires some things on our part, without which we have no reason to expect such a participation of the Spirit; but upon which we are encouraged to hope for it. When the apostle speaks in the form of an exhortation, it evidently supposes this: and an exhortation
to

to the end, is the same thing as an exhortation to use some means in order to that end.

This may be illustrated by some cautions which are given by the same apostle. One is to the *Romans*, Rom. xiv. 16. *Let not your good be evil spoken of.* And another is to *Timothy*, 1 Tim. iv. 12. *Let no man despise thy youth.* It might be said in either case; The tongues or contempt of other people are not things in our power; how then come such exhortations to be addressed to us? The context in both places shews the meaning to be this; *Take heed of giving occasion* to have your good evil-spoken of, or your youth despised: and on the other hand, *do all you can toward securing* the reputation of your profession, and a just respect. So here, *Be ye filled with the Spirit*, i. e. use the means proper on your part, in order to be so.

Now the persons who hear this exhortation, may be of *two* sorts: either such who are not yet partakers of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit; or such in whom a good work is begun. And I reckon it proper to consider these cases distinctly; and to shew, I. That there are duties incumbent even upon unconverted sinners, in order to their participation of the saving influences of the Spirit. II. That something farther is incumbent upon real Christians, in order to their being *filled* with the Spirit.

The present discourse shall be on the former head, *That there are duties required by God even of those who are not yet in a state of grace, in order to their partaking of the saving influences of the Spirit.*

Tho' the words are directly addressed to those who are supposed to be Christians, and are a call to them to aim at higher degrees of participation; yet sinners who enjoy the Gospel are not free from the obligation of them. It is not indeed their *first* and immediate duty, to be *filled* with the Spirit; but to seek after his first sanctifying operations, and so to proceed on to greater advances.

But a difficulty may immediately arise in the minds of many upon this occasion. It may be said; "How is this consistent with the freeness of the grace of the Spirit? Is he not a free and voluntary agent? Can men do any thing that shall render them worthy of the Spirit, or procure his grace? And how can a fallen creature, before he is renewed, make use of any means to a good purpose? How then can any thing done by us be considered as a means of obtaining the Spirit?"

This difficulty, unless it be removed out of the way, I doubt may hinder many from attending to proper directions, or from setting themselves in earnest, as they might, to put them in practice. I shall therefore, I. Offer some things for stating this point. And then,

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then, II. Propose the duties incumbent upon you.

I. It will be proper to offer some things for the stating of this point. Three observations may suffice for that purpose.

1. Nothing which sinners can do can in the least *deserve* the communications of the divine Spirit: but as far as any duties to be performed by them are means of grace, it is merely owing to God's free and gracious constitution.

There is no such intrinsic worth and goodness in any endeavours that sinners can use, or in any steps that they can take, as to lay an obligation upon the blessed God in a way of merit to give his holy Spirit. Far be such an arrogant presumptuous thought from the mind of us all. The utmost that sinners can do, is so very little, and mixed with so much imperfection, and they who do it have sin so predominant as yet in their hearts, that on supposition they did it to their utmost, they could not merit the grace of God. If they should apply seriously to read and hear the word of God; if they should bethink themselves, and *walk softly*, restraining themselves from open enormities; if they should cry ever so loud for mercy; this could not of itself give them the least right to God's help for bringing them out of their miserable case. He might justly, if he had not been pleased
in

in free grace to give better hope, reject their prayers, and still leave them in the state of impotence and distance from him, into which sin had cast them. It is little less presumption to think that the *grace* of the Spirit can be *purchased* by any of our endeavours, than that of *Simon Magus* was, when he thought that his *gifts* might be *purchased with money*, Acts viii. 20. Indeed the better and more lively endeavours of real Christians to obtain a fuller participation of him, deserve not the blessing.

And as there is not such intrinsic value in any thing sinners can do, so there is no *natural connection* between it and the grace of the Spirit. If there be any connection between them, it must be *made* by the free mercy and goodness of God: For the influences of the Spirit are intirely a supernatural gift, a provision of sovereign grace for lost sinners; a blessing which the light of nature could not have described, and made known to us only by divine revelation. When we had *destroyed ourselves*, and were reduced to an utter inability to help and relieve ourselves, supposing we should have come to a sense of this, and that it was out of the power of any but God to help us; yet we could have had no foundation for asking his help, unless he had made the discovery first, that he was ready to help us. Without that, he might justly have charged it upon

us as arrogance and presumption to expect any such thing at his hands. All our hope is built on this, that while *we have destroyed ourselves*, he hath graciously let us know that *in him is our help*, Hof. xiii. 9.

So then, as the apostle says, *Rom. ix. 16. it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* That any come to be of the true spiritual *Israel* (of which the apostle seems to be there speaking) are effectually called by the Holy Spirit, and so introduced into a covenant-state; is not owing merely to the towardly disposition of men, or to the virtue of any means which they make use of. Those means would never effect a change without the Spirit, nor would their best use of them deserve the Spirit. Therefore it is intirely owing to the sovereign mercy of God, that any are recovered; even though they should be found in the ordinary way of his grace more than others. To the same purpose the apostle speaks to the *Ephesians*, *Eph. ii. 8, 9. By grace are ye saved, thro' faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.* All our salvation is owing to grace: not only the blessings to which we are admitted upon believing, but even our faith itself; for that is not of ourselves, but by the operation of God's Spirit; as well as the benefits consequent upon it, follow upon faith, by the constitution of his grace. And that

that operation of the Spirit is not owing to any worthiness in us, or in any of our works before faith; but it is the free gift of God, which he might justly have refused, if he had pleased. And therefore there can be no room for boasting.

But all this carries no inconsistency in it with God's having freely and graciously established a constitution, wherein he encourages us to hope for the grace of his Spirit in a stated way.

It is not one jot the less grace, because he directs us to be found in the use of means. To pretend merit in any of our endeavours, or that the gift of the Spirit is tied down to them from an intrinsic worth in them, would indeed be exceedingly disparaging to the grace of God, and to the truth of the Gospel. But it is not in the least so to assert, that he hath directed even sinners to a course wherein they may hope that he will be found of them; when the hope of success in such a course is founded neither upon an apprehension of their own sufficiency to change their hearts by those means without the Spirit, nor upon a conceit of value in their endeavours to procure the Spirit, but merely upon God's own free intimations of his mind. It was as much grace in God to the *Israelites*, to throw down the walls of *Jericho* upon their compassing the city with the sound of rams horns, as if he had done it without any such means inter-

vening: and as much grace in Christ to cure the blind man by spitting on the ground, and making clay of the spittle, and anointing his eyes, and bidding him to *go and wash in the pool of Siloam*, as if he had done it immediately. And why should it be esteemed any diminution of the free grace of God, to maintain, that in order to sinners expectation of his saving grace, he will have them to apply themselves to such and such means? when those things are not pretended to have a *natural efficacy* for producing or procuring a new nature; but only to be *appointed means*, or God's prescribed way, wherein he ordinarily chuses to be gracious; and means worthy of the wisdom of God to prescribe.

To me divine mercy shines more illustriously in having left directions to sinners to what course to betake themselves, and in what way to hope for his grace, than if he had left them altogether at an uncertainty, till they feel that grace itself actually surprizing them.

God in the whole work of our salvation hath not only signalized *the riches of his grace*, but *therein hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence*, Eph. i. 7, 8. He has chosen to display his mercy in harmony with his other blessed perfections: therefore he grants us not a pardon absolutely, but upon an atonement; nor interests us in that, without faith. And why should it be thought strange, that he should

should have the same regards in his constitution of grace published to sinners in common? That he should therein treat them according to the reasonable natures he hath given them; striking upon the main principles of human action, hope and fear, and putting them upon exercises suitable to their present condition, with encouraging intimations of success by his grace.

2. Nothing required from sinners in order to their participation of the Spirit, is expected to be done by their mere natural power; but the preventing grace of the same Spirit is supposed even to this. Men indeed are generally represented in scripture as destitute of the Spirit, till their effectual turn from sin to God. So, *Jude* 19. *Sensual, having not the Spirit.* The same is given as the character of all who are not in a saving relation to Christ, *Rom. viii. 9. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* These and other Scriptures speak of men as without the Spirit, till they partake of his influences so far as to be actually renewed by them, and to become obedient to the faith. Till they become a willing people in the day of his power, they have not the Spirit dwelling in them, as in his temples; he is not a vital, prevailing principle of action to them; he is not in them as the earnest of the inheritance. But this blessed agent has a great deal to do with the minds of sinners before that. There are his

common, as well as his *special* operations. There is an agency of his as promiscuously and extensively afforded as the Gospel is; this indeed is the spring and source of any good thought or motion in the mind of a fallen creature. *Every good and perfect gift, in the sphere of moral goodness, in opposition to sin, of which the apostle is there speaking, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, Jam. i. 17.* And all the good of this kind that comes to men from God, we are taught to consider as immediately conveyed by his Spirit. *We are not sufficient, in our lapsed state, to think any thing that is good, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5.* And therefore, as in order to the old creation, so in order to the new, the Spirit of God is beforehand moving upon the waters, and so far relieving the natural weakness of sinners, that they are made capable of a rational and serious use of appointed means. Upon this foot Gospel-exhortations are fitly addressed to them; and peculiar threatnings are most justly added to those who shall neglect or reject the salvation offered in it. God promises to *give a new heart*: that shews the necessity of his grace to produce it. In another place he exhorts sinners, *Ezek. xviii. 31. Cast away from you all your transgressions, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? That shews, that some duty*

duty lies upon them in order to it; and they are capable of performing that duty, not of themselves, but by virtue of the preparatory grace of the Spirit.

3. It is not asserted, that God never makes any partakers of the effectual grace of his Spirit, who are not found in the use of appointed means; but that this is his ordinary way of acting, and the only rule we have for our expectation.

There are miracles of sovereign grace in every age. That which was said of the Gentile world, is sometimes accomplished also in the case of particular persons, *Rom. x. 20. I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.* God hath graciously arrested sinners in the height of their rebellion and opposition to him, when they had not one serious thought about their souls, and were quite out of the way of ordinary means. By such surprizes of mercy he is pleased now and then to give a striking proof, that conversion is his work, and that he hath not limited himself to the means which he hath prescribed to us; or he brings a prodigal home by some extraordinary methods, for the sake of some great purposes which he has to serve by him, who would otherwise scarce ever be in any likely way of recovery. But this is not God's usual method. And it would be the highest folly and presumption in other sinners, who have the stated

means and calls of the Gospel, to neglect a serious attendance on them, upon a vain hope that God may go out of his way to meet with them: as much folly, as it would be for a man to neglect a prudential care for his daily bread, in hope that God will feed him with manna from heaven, as he did the *Israelites*; or by ravens, as he did *Elijah*: as much presumption, as to expect an immediate voice from heaven to bring them home, because God took such a course in order to *Saul's* conversion, who was afterwards the blessed apostle *Paul*.

The sum of all is this. Tho' a sinner can do nothing to *deserve* the grace of the Holy Spirit; though in his fallen state he would not *of himself* do anything that hath the least tendency towards a saving change; though God sometimes makes monuments of his grace in an extraordinary way: yet in his wise grace, he hath directed sinners to a course and way of acting, wherein they may hope to be made partakers of his saving influences; and they are capable of applying themselves to this course and way of acting by the help of his common grace: and in that course alone he hath given them ground to hope that he will effectually work in them both to will and to do. I now proceed,

II. To represent to you what is incumbent upon sinners in order to their entertaining hope of being born of the Spirit.

I. They

1. They should apply themselves diligently to attain christian knowledge. *My people perish for lack of knowledge*, was God's declaration of old concerning the people of the *Jews*, Hof. iv. 6. Till the minds of men are competently furnished with knowledge, the first step is not taken in the way toward life ; for without this, there is nothing for the Spirit of God to work upon in the ordinary way. When he causes *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ to shine into the heart*, he is not wont miraculously to convey new notions, different from those already revealed in his word, and which men were unacquainted with before ; but he affects the heart in another and more powerful manner with the truths which they are supposed to have learned already out of the word of God.

This makes a religious education, in places where the profession of christianity is already settled, to be so eminent and frequent a means of saving impressions. Persons by that means have their minds stored with the principles of religion in the most teachable age : are led betimes to converse with their Bibles ; have the help of good parents, pious acquaintance, and serious books for understanding the Scriptures ; and are trained up in a frequent attendance upon the ministry of the Gospel. These things serve to possess them with the materials which the Spirit ordinarily makes use of for real conversion.

version. And therefore all those who have young people under their care, are concerned to give them the best assistances they can this way : and it must be either an insincere pretence, or the effect of a very wild enthusiasm, for any to seem desirous of the salvation of their children, or to pray to God for it, while they are negligent in their own endeavours to furnish their minds with useful instruction.

As ever therefore you would obtain the Spirit, if you have the advantage of a religious education, see that you improve it, and the several means it puts in your hands, to lay up a good treasure of knowledge. Or if you should have been so unhappy as to miss of that blessing in your younger years, you have the more occasion for a close application to all the means of knowledge which the providence of God now gives you. You should be very diligent in reading and hearing the word of God. *Faith usually comes by hearing*, Rom. x. 17. which is peculiarly the sense of discipline and instruction, and at the same time an attendance on God's special ordinance, the ministry of reconciliation. If you do this with an intention and desire to learn the mind of God, and to become wise unto salvation, you may take encouragement from such a declaration as that, *Prov. ii. 1, &c. My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee ; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding :*

ing : yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures : then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

2. They should often turn in upon their own minds, and seriously consider how the several truths with which they are acquainted concern themselves, and are applicable to their own case. Personal application gives life and force to every truth ; and for want of it, the general knowledge which most people receive, makes little or no impression. What they read or hear, they *know* it not *for themselves*, and therefore not *for their good*, Job v. 27. But if you would frequently bring the word of God and yourselves together, there might be hope of a good effect.

You know, for instance, the large extent of God's commands, and the spirituality of his law, as Christ hath explained it. Bring this home, and say, " O my soul, what obedience have I paid to this law ? Have there been no open violations of it ? Or, though I should be able to say, *All these have I kept from my youth up*, so as to escape gross sins ; yet *in how many things have I offended in word ?* and in how many more in *thoughts of foolishness ?* I am then a sinful creature ; and I know the soul that sinneth is liable to die. But the Gospel brings the joyful news

“ news of a Saviour ; and have not I, as a
 “ poor sinful, dying wretch, absolute need
 “ of him : Yet I find none intituled by the
 “ Gospel to the salvation he brings without
 “ faith in him, and repentance toward God ;
 “ can I then lay claim to him as a penitent
 “ believer ?” This is the apostle’s exhorta-
 tion, *2 Cor. xiii. 5. Examine yourselves, whe-*
ther ye be in the faith : prove your own selves.
Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus
Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ? i. e.
 that he dwells in you by his Spirit, and so has
 his holy resemblance formed in you, unless
 you are yet in a state of disapprobation and
 non-acceptance with God. If sinners would
 be persuaded to turn their own face to the
 glass of the Gospel, it might be hoped under
 the common influences of the Spirit to pro-
 duce convictions in their minds of their mi-
 serable state, which would be a promising step.

When you read or hear of the unspeakable
 blessings that come by Christ, of the happi-
 ness of those who are in him, and the pro-
 mises for time and eternity which are made
 to them ; if you would but turn inward,
 and think how much happier a creature
 should I be than now I am, or than all this
 world can make me, if I was but a Chri-
 stian indeed ; this would kindle some desire
 after a change of condition.

Do you hear of the riches of divine grace,
 of the good-will of God to men, or the mo-
 numents

numents he hath made of his grace in others? Would it not yield some reviving hope to animate your endeavours, if you would apply the thought to your own case, and say, Why should I despair, as if there was none of the same grace for me?

When you hear the particular subject I am upon discoursed of; so kind and effectual a provision as the grace of the Spirit discovered for the relief of human weakness and corruption, his readiness to take sinners under his charge, and the blessedness of being filled with him; think how you are concerned in it. “ I
 “ am one of those who greatly need his grace;
 “ If I had it, it would be sufficient for me; and
 “ how happy would my soul be, would he but
 “ take up his residence there, and dispossess the
 “ sinful thoughts, and irregular inclinations,
 “ and feverish passions which govern me, and
 “ fill me with his own train of graces! Have
 “ I reason to despair of it? No, he has cured
 “ souls as distempered as mine. The Gospel
 “ reveals him as the physician of souls, with-
 “ out discouraging the greatest sinners from
 “ applying to him for help, indeed with
 “ strong encouragements to all who hear of
 “ him to seek his kind offices; I will therefore
 “ wish and hope, and try and wait. Have I
 “ not had many kind motions from him in
 “ my breast already? Fool that I was, not to
 “ attend to them and fall in with them! But
 “ while I am yet making this reflection, it is
 “ a

“ a sign he is still striving with me ; he has
 “ put me upon it, and shall I not then pur-
 “ sue the motion with farther humble appli-
 “ cations to him ?” Was but this thy frame,
 O sinner, he who *heard* and regarded *Ephraim*
bemoaning himself, Jer. xxxi. 18. might be
 hoped to hear and regard thee.

3. They should carefully abstain from all the plain and known obstructions to his gracious influences. Such are gross sins, as intemperance and sensualities. In this sense we may consider what the apostle deports from, and what he exhorts to in the text, as directly opposite: *Be not filled with wine*, which leads to all *excess*, if you would desire to *be filled with the Spirit*. Nothing can be a greater impediment to the influences of the Spirit or to the success of them, than drunkenness and the unbridled indulgence of appetite. The great aim of the Spirit is to lead us to spiritual-mindedness ; while acts of sensuality directly feed and strengthen the carnal mind. If good men fall by the surprize of temptation into any such thing, they cause the Spirit eminently to withdraw. The *Psalmist* was sensible of this when he came to himself out of his great sin ; he recollected the long stupidity and hardness into which that sin had cast him, which could not having been of so long continuance in one born of God, under such a lively and vigorous agency of the Spirit as he had enjoyed in former times ; and being convinced how justly the
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the Spirit was provoked to leave him, he now cries, *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me*, Psal. li. 11. And as such sins are an unspeakable hindrance to the progress of saints, and indeed set them a great way back in the christian life; so nothing can put sinners farther out of the way of the Spirit's first saving impressions. Any hopeful convictions, already excited in their minds, are shaken off and stifled; the actings of reason and thought are disordered; they are no fit to be applied to as men, and therefore most unlikely to partake of sanctifying grace. Though mere sobriety, and temperance, and chastity do not intitle men to the grace of God; yet certainly it must be said, that men of such a character are not so far from the kingdom of God, in the usual methods of grace, as those who are openly dissolute. The Spirit is more likely to be a monitor to those who *shew themselves men*; and they have their natural faculties more open to give him some hearing, than men drowned in wine, and wholly carried away with the torrent of impetuous lusts. Now there are none of you, whose consciences must not tell you, that you can if you will abstain from these excesses.

4. It much concerns sinners diligently to observe and improve all tender seasons. All men, unless we must except some who have run prodigious lengths of sin, and so have their hearts hardened like the nether millstone, have some times of peculiar softness; when thoughts
about

about their souls are stronger than usual; when conscience admonishes with some life and freedom; when convictions stare them in the face; when they are in a disposition to make some good purposes and resolutions. Now these are happy gales of the Spirit, which, if carefully attended to, might be improved to good purposes. Too many set themselves to shake them off by carnal diversions: others neglect them. When they have *beheld their natural face as in a glass*, they go their way, and straightway forget what manner of men they were, Jam. i. 23, 24. But as ever you would hope that the Spirit should carry on his work with effect, you should carefully watch these favourable opportunities, and endeavour so far to fall in with them, as not to rest till you can find the happy effect.

5. They should, above all, earnestly and frequently pray to God for his sanctifying grace. It is indeed supposed to this, that the good Spirit has already proceeded so far with you under the light of the Gospel, as to give you some sense, that a change of your present condition is highly necessary, that his grace is needful to produce that change, and that you have some encouragement to ask for it. What shouldst thou do, sinner, under these impressions, but lie at the footstool of his mercy, and resolve, that if thou perish, thou wilt perish there; if thou art still afraid of success, let it be some revival to thy hope,
that

that thou art certainly in the way of thy present duty; quite in another manner, than if thou wast bidding him defiance, contemning his grace, and endeavouring to stifle thy convictions. Thou art in the way which he declares that he expects ordinarily to be taken, before he accomplishes his designs of grace. It is observable, that after the most absolute promises of that which we find in all the Scriptures, *Ezek. xxxvi. 26, &c.* he concludes them with this solemn declaration, ver. 37. *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* Thou art in the way which Christ prescribed to his hearers for obtaining the Spirit from the common Father in heaven, with strong encouragement to hope for success, *Luke xi. 13.*

Be not affrighted with such a declaration as that, *Prov. xv. 8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* As if because you apprehend yourselves not yet to be thorough converts, therefore your prayers for converting grace are abomination to God. If you take the words in that sense; you utterly mistake them. *Solomon* speaks only of the professions of respect to God, made by men resolved in wickedness. But God forbid that we should apprehend him to place in the same class the earnest prayers of men under serious convictions for God's saving grace. These last are acts of obedience to his command

which he puts them upon in Scripture: *Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near, Isa. lv. 6.* Where do you find in the word of God any discouragements to sinners, when they made such applications? On the contrary, we have there many comfortable instances of success, When such a prodigy of a sinner as *Manasseh* was, besought the Lord, and prayed unto him, he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. When *Ephraim* bemoaned himself, confessed his past obstinacy, and put up this hearty prayer, *Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God;* instead of a repulse, God declares, *I will surely have mercy on him,* Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. When the prodigal son bethought himself, made serious reflections, and resolved to arise and return to his father, and with confession of his sin to beg that he would *make him as one of his hired servants;* how pathetically is the grace of God represented upon that occasion after the manner of men? *Luke xv. 20. While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* These things are certainly left upon record for the encouragement of convinced sinners, no longer to keep away from God, but earnestly to sue for his grace.

6. They should hereupon attempt an intire surrender of themselves to God in Christ upon
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the terms of the Gospel, not doubting of his grace to accompany them herein.

If you have endeavoured to pursue the first direction, that is, to set yourselves diligently to attain christian knowledge; I suppose you have especially made it your business to be acquainted with the tenor of the covenant, or what in the sense of the Gospel is acceptable religion; that without which men have no title to the blessings and privileges of the children of God, but upon which they are in a state of acceptance. This is expressed sometimes by regeneration, or being *born again*; sometimes by *conversion*; by *faith*, or by *faith and repentance* joined together, as in *Acts* xx. 21. by *yielding ourselves to God*, &c. It is very plain, that sincerity, and not absolute perfection, is intended by these or any the like phrases. I would offer my apprehension in a few words concerning the claim of the Gospel in this matter. Then a man is truly born again, and in a state of acceptance, *when he hath such a persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, as engages him to accept Jesus Christ, as he is proposed there; and upon the motives of the Gospel, to renounce the practice of every known sin in hearty purpose and resolution, and to devote himself in upright design to the service of God and to the practice of universal holiness.* Now that which I would exhort convinced sinners to, is, not to stop short when they have taken the former

steps, as if they must leave the matter there; but still to proceed on, in the strength of grace received, and not doubting of more, to exert the several acts of a solemn surrender to God in Christ. It was prophesied, that sinful *Israel* should take such a course upon their return from captivity, *Jer. l. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.* If you find your hearts consenting, doubt not but this is the special grace of the Spirit, making you a willing people in the day of his power.

I shall make at present but two reflections.

1. All true converts have reason to magnify the grace of God in making them to differ from others. Some are met with in the very high-road to destruction. And even those who were found in the use of means, must ever own, that grace, and not desert, gave success. And they must be conscious to themselves of many great defects in the use they made of the means in their power. So that they will ever have reason to say, *By the grace of God I am what I am, 1 Cor. xv. 10.*

2. Every unreclaimed sinner will be absolutely inexcusable. God would be justified in the ruin of sinners, if he had made no proposals of mercy. But sinners under the Gospel must be much more speechless, since a prize was put in their hands, but they had
not

not a heart to make use of it. When *Naaman* expressed a resentment at *Elijah's* sending him to wash seven times in *Jordan*, in order to the cure of his leprosy, his servants expostulated with him thus, *2 Kings v. 13.* *If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee; wash and be clean?* So may not I say, had more difficult means been prescribed by God, should not you, sinners, seriously attempt and try? How much more inexcusable must you be, when there is a visible way wherein you may hope to come at the greatest blessing, if you shall live in a proud contempt of it, as if it was not worth seeking? or in a lazy, supine negligence, when promising means are within reach?

S E R M O N XVI.

Being filled with the Spirit.

E P H. v. 18. the latter part.

—*Be filled with the Spirit.*

FOR the three general heads proposed at the first entrance upon this subject,

I. The sense and import of the terms hath been distinctly explained ; what we are to understand by *the Spirit*, and then by *being filled with the Spirit*.

II. A considerable progress hath been made upon the next head ; *viz.* What is implied in such an exhortation being addressed to us. *Be ye filled with the Spirit.* This intimates the *desirableness* of it, the *attainableness* of it, and that something is incumbent upon us as *our duty in order to it*.

In the last discourse it was shewn, That *there are duties incumbent even upon those who*
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are not yet in a state of acceptance, in order to their partaking of the Spirit, so far as to introduce them into a state of grace.

I now proceed to the case of those who are already in such a state, to whom the exhortation in the text is most directly addressed; and to shew,

That something farther is incumbent upon these who are born again, in order to their being filled with the Spirit.

And certainly the rule of their expectation is more clear and explicit than in the case of unconverted sinners. I know no sober divines, who are not ready to own, that the promises of improvement and progress in holiness, to those in whom a good work is begun, are conditional. If this was not allowed in *their* case at least, I could not put any tolerable sense upon that maxim, which Christ more than once delivers; that *whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath*, Mat. xiii.

12. chap. xxv. 29. It is plain, that by *having* is not meant merely having in possession; but having so, as to use and improve what a man hath. The scope of both the places necessarily fixes this sense. In the former passage, the disciples asked Christ, why he spake to the multitude only in parables, without giving the explication of them, *ver. 10.* Christ answers, *ver. 11.* *Because it is given to you to*

know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever bath, to him shall be given, &c. As if he had said, "This practice of mine is agreeable to
 " a stated rule; That they who with honesty
 " and simplicity receive instruction, and im-
 " prove the advantages which God hath given
 " them to the ends of religion and the in-
 " crease of goodness, shall have farther in-
 " struction and greater assistances still afford-
 " ed them: but they who make no improve-
 " ment of the advantages they have, may ra-
 " ther expect to be deprived of what they
 " have, than to obtain more." In the fol-
 lowing verses he shews, that this latter was
 the case of the greatest part of his common
 hearers, *ver. 13. Therefore speak I to them in
 parables; because they seeing, see not, and hear-
 ing, they hear not, neither do they understand.*
 Though they see the greatest miracles, yet
 they are not convinced; and when they hear
 the plainest doctrines, they do not attend to
 them, or set themselves to understand them.
 On the other hand, to his disciples he says,
*ver. 16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see;
 and your ears, for they hear.* You are con-
 vinced by what you see, and are desirous to
 understand what you hear: And so he goes
 on to explain to them the parable he had de-
 livered. It is equally plain, that we are to un-
 derstand *having*, in the same sense of a con-
 scientious improvement, in the parable of the
 talents,

talents, *chap. xxv.* for this is the whole scope of that parable, wherein mens characters are drawn by their improvement or non-improvement of talents received, and sentence is pronounced upon them accordingly; and then this rule is annexed. The improvements indeed made by good men *deserve not* farther grace; yet the gift of it is plainly connected with them by divine promise: and they have the greatest reason to expect eminent decays in every part of the renewed temper, and that the Spirit will in a great measure withdraw, if they are negligent in the duties required of them, in order to their being filled with him. What these are, I am now to represent.

I. Christians are concerned to maintain strong and habitual desires of the Spirit's farther influences and fruits. He never acts with such pleasure and power in any soul, as where he is a welcome guest; and enlarged desires make way for enlarged communications: whereas indifference damps his motions. The rule is, *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*, Psal. lxxxix. 10. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled*, Matt. v. 6. *He filleth the hungry with good things, but sendeth the rich empty away*, Luke i. 53. When a Christian hath his heart full of the world, or fondly apprehends himself to have so large a share of the Spirit already, as to have no need of more; he is in a very unlikely posture to receive much
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from above. The Spirit of God loves to act in a soul, neither conceitedly full of itself, nor contentedly full of inferior good; but that sees an emptiness in every thing else without him, and such an inexhaustible fullness in him as keeps desire fresh and lively. If we *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, he will be ready at hand to such a seeker: for earthly things are the great rivals with the Spirit for our affections, and strong affections one way will blunt the edge of the other. To keep under our earthly affections therefore, is the way to have much of the Spirit. And we should frequently meditate on the blessedness of being filled with him, how worthy he is of our most ardent desires. All the representation made of him in Scripture shews him to be so; his benignity, his all-sufficiency, the gracious tendency of all his operations, and their suitableness to our wants; and our own experience already, *if we have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious*, confirms this. What pleasant hours have those been, when he has come and blown upon his garden? How easy, how delightful has duty been at such times? How *did our hearts burn within us*? What advances were we able to make in the christian life? But when we were left to our own spirits, how dull, how dead our performances? How little could we do or bear for God? Like *Sampson* with his locks cut, we found ourselves feeble and

and good for little, if we thought to go out and do as at other times. We should often call these things to remembrance to invigorate our desires. By such means evil desires are produced and fed in the minds of sinners, by ruminating on the agreeableness of tempting objects to sense; so they *make provision for the works of the flesh.* Therefore Solomon cautions those addicted to intemperance, *not to look upon the wine, when it is red, when it gives its colour in the cup, when it moveth it self aright,* Prov. xxiii. 31. And Christ forbids *looking upon a woman to lust after her,* Mat. v. 28. Christians should make such provision for the works of the Spirit, kindling their desires by frequent and steady contemplation of the worth and excellence of the object.

2. All the sacred institutions wherein the Spirit hath encouraged us to expect he will meet us, must be diligently attended.

They who vainly think themselves above ordinances, really put themselves out of the way of the Spirit: for he acts principally in and by these. Here he increases the light of his saints, strengthens their faith, inflames their love, and excites their graces to proper exercise, and is used to dispense his most refreshing consolations. Tho' his communications are not confined to them, yet they are his stated ways of intercourse. There are peculiar promises of his presence in them, *Draw nigh to God,*

God, and he will draw nigh to you, Jam. iv. 8. They have a special aptitude to our reasonable nature. And good men are supposed, when they engage in such exercises, to be eminently in a frame to wait for him, and to give him entertainment: that is the very language of their approach, and their regular business there is neither with small nor great; but with the king of *Israel*. If they come to them in obedience to his institution, *through desire they separate themselves, to seek and intermeddle with heavenly wisdom*, Prov. xviii. 1. And then they may hope to find what they come for.

If we are frequent and serious in our private retirements, conversing with God, and his word, and our own souls; our Father, which sees in secret, will be with us by his Spirit; and by making this our daily exercise, we may hope to secure him with us all the day long.

Publick ordinances are equally necessary to the improvement of Christians. To them *Israel* of old was directed for meeting with God, *Exod. xx. 24. In places, where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.* When the church, full of longing affection, desires to know where she may meet her Lord, he points her to the same course, *Cant. i. 7, 8. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon: for why should I be*

be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? She is full of solicitude to be under the kind influences and improving care of her shepherd. His direction is, *If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents.* Christ himself guides our expectation the same way, when he declares, *Matt. xviii. 20. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,* i. e. by his Spirit. It is observable, that when the dispensation of the Spirit was more eminently to commence upon Christ's ascension, his extraordinary influences were first manifested, when *the disciples were all with one accord in one place,* Acts ii. 1. As if he intended by that circumstance to shew Christians where they were chiefly to expect him. As ever we would have our souls to prosper, we should *not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of too many is now,* as well as it was in the apostle's days, *Heb. x. 25.*

And as the Lord's-day is the most stated season by divine appointment under the Gospel for religious exercises, so it claims a peculiar regard from all who desire a plentiful share of the Spirit. It should not be forgotten, that *St. John was eminently in the Spirit on the Lord's day,* Rev. i. 10. And tho' that phrase included in his case the extraordinary influences

fluences of the Spirit in a way of inspiration, yet it signified his being in a very pious frame also; and so common Christians may hope to be too, if they endeavour to leave their worldly cares and thoughts behind them, and to imploy that sacred time in the publick and private exercises of religion.

All God's sacred institutions are apt means of obtaining the Spirit's influence. As,

A diligent and continued study of the Holy Scriptures. They are sufficient, as a rule, *to make us perfect*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. They contain the mind of the Spirit: and he is not used to carry on his work in saints, any more than to begin it in sinners, by immediate revelation; but to assist their increase in the knowledge of God, by accompanying their own search of the Scriptures with his light and grace to discern the deep things of God.

A careful attendance on the ministry of the Gospel, is another of his appointments. Those who are born of God, should *desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. Those two exhortations stand together, 1 *Thess.* v. 19, 20. *Quench not the Spirit; Despise not prophesying.* Prophesying there is probably understood to signify one of the methods of publick instruction in use in the primitive times, for explaining the Scriptures. The apostle, by connecting these two exhortations, may intimate to us, that to despise prophesying is one way of quenching the Spirit. Close

Close and fixed meditation on divine things is an exercise wherein he has often met his servants. The *Psalmist* presaged, that *his soul should be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when he remembered God upon his bed, and meditated on him in the night-watches,* Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. And when a good man, from his *delight in the law of God, meditates on it day and night; that, along with his being planted by the rivers of water, will contribute to his bringing forth fruit in season,* Psal. i. 2, 3.

Singing of *Psalms* is recommended for the same end. So the verse after the text may be understood, as prescribing a means of farther participation of the Spirit. *Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.* While you are endeavouring this way to raise devout affections, you may hope he will come in to your aid, and blow up the holy spark into a flame.

Prayer is an exercise more frequently mentioned than any one in particular, wherein his agency may be expected. On that account he is stiled *the Spirit of grace and supplication,* Zech. xii. 10. Though he helps our infirmities in other cases, yet the apostle directly speaks of his doing so in prayer, *Rom. viii. 26. The Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but*
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the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Here are two eminent branches of his help in prayer intimated; *direction* what to pray for, by convincing us of our wants, and of that in the divine promises which is suitable to them; and then *exciting* those sincere and fervent affections, those lively and vigorous desires which are the soul of prayer. We are directed also to *pray always*, i. e. frequently, *with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*, Eph. vi. 18. to *pray in the Holy Ghost*, Jude 20. which plainly intimates, that Christians, in the performance of the duty of prayer, may hope to find him ready at hand with his gracious aids.

And when the Lord's-supper is instituted for purposes every way serviceable to our spiritual interests, our conscientious attendance upon that must lay us directly under the province of the Spirit.

Those who would be filled with the Spirit, should live in the neglect of none of these, but *walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord*, as each of them claims our regard upon his authority. If we live in the customary neglect of any, we may have just reason to fear lest he should withhold his presence in others.

3. All things which have a direct tendency to quench his motions, should be carefully guarded against.

Such

Such are eminently all fleshly lusts. These are directly opposite to the characters by which he hath made himself known, as the *Holy Spirit*, the *Spirit sent down from heaven*, whither nothing that defiles can enter. *Sensual, having not the Spirit*, are characters closely connected, *Jude* 19. Sensuality reigning is a sure sign that men hath not the Spirit in his saving operations; and acts of sensuality are the greatest obstructions, in any who have received him, to his progressive influences. Would to God there were no occasion to offer such a caution to the disciples of Christ, but that the use of it were confined only to those who have not tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious. But offences of this kind, God knows, have too often been given by some of a better character; and caution even against such evils are addressed in Scripture to visible saints. The apostle calls the church of *Colosse* to *mortify their affections which were upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, evil concupiscence*, *Col. iii. 5*. And Christ saw it needful to charge his own disciples, *Luke xxi. 34*. to *take heed to themselves, lest at any time their hearts should be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*. And in the text *St. Paul* warns Christians against *being filled with wine*; as not only a great evil in itself, but which stands in direct opposition to being filled with the Spirit. The same is to be said of impurity

in any degree of it ; it is not only highly unworthy of those who are become the temple of the Holy Ghost, but defiles that temple, and is like to make God withdraw. The Scripture represents the flesh and the spirit as in a struggle even in good men, *Gal. v. 17.* Now, though the first motions of the flesh may be in the best ; yet if they *walk in the Spirit, they shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh,* ver. 16. If they listen to his gracious suggestions, and set themselves to oppose depraved inclinations, under the aids he is at hand to dispense ; they shall get the mastery of them, and the heavenly guest will with complacency continue still to assist them in farther conflicts ; but if his motions are neglected, and the flesh indulged, they must expect a great suspension of his influences : it may be for a long time, as in the case of *David.*

Diabolical sins equally silence him : such as wrath and malice, and envy and uncharitableness, which eminently *grieve* him ; as is intimated by the connection of the two exhortations, not to *grieve* him, and to put away those vices, *Eph. iv. 30, 31.* The Spirit of love chuses to reside and act freely in a soul that breathes the same heavenly temper.

4. The Spirit should be directly eyed and employed by us, according to the province which he is revealed to sustain. Since his
agency

agency is so particularly revealed in the Gospel, he justly expects that Christians should more explicitly direct their eye to him, and acknowledge their need of him, through the course of the christian life, than the saints of former ages usually did. It is true, when we pray for any spiritual good, for any christian virtue, it is in effect praying for the Spirit, because God confers it upon us by his Spirit: and in former ages, when the œconomy of the sacred Three in the work of our salvation was but darkly intimated, this might be sufficient; as Old-Testament saints did not directly pray in the name of Christ, before his mediation was clearly made known, though they were then beholding to that for their acceptance. But now we cannot hope for the answer of our prayers, unless we offer them explicitly in the name of Christ, and actually depend on his mediation, according to the express revelation of it. So it will justly be displeasing to the Blessed Spirit now, if an actual acknowledgment of him in his special providence be neglected, when that province of his is fully brought to light. As now we must *live the life we live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God*; so also by the faith of his Spirit. He expects, that his grace should be actually owned by Christians in all the good they have already received or done; and without it he is like to be provoked to suspend it for the future, till they

are made becomingly sensible to whom they are indebted. And he will be actually depended on for the grace we farther need. An habitual and lively sense of our own insufficiency for that which is good should be maintained, and a fixed persuasion of his ability and readiness to help our infirmities: and accordingly we should often apply to God, not only for those spiritual blessings which the Spirit confers, but directly for the Spirit to confer them. This is the way to obtain his most enlarged supplies, when he is expressly honoured as the Spirit of all grace.

5. We should carefully improve and fall in with his influences, as they are offered. This is the thing imported by the phrase of being *led by the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.

It implies a care to observe his motions. And every good motion is from him. We are not blindly to pursue every thought started in our minds, and therefore not even his suggestions without examination: otherwise very evil motions, from the devil or our own deluding imaginations, may be mistaken for his. Too many under pretence of the Spirit's impulse, have run into the greatest extravagances, to the disgrace of the Spirit, the prejudice of others, and their own great misery. But any suggestion that occurs, must be tried by the rule of his own word. *To the law and to the testimony; if it be not according*

According to this word, there is no light, no goodness in it, *Isa.* viii. 20. But if it appears unquestionably good by that rule, then we should fall in with it. And indeed this may be one way of cherishing his influences, which cannot fail to be exceeding pleasing to him. When we find our hearts smite us for some frame or action as amiss, or for the omission of something we have hitherto neglected or done little in; let us turn to the sacred oracles, and endeavour to learn thence the mind of God in such a case: and if conscience has been excited by the Spirit to give us such an admonition, we shall find something in Scripture to confirm the conviction, to shew us more fully the evil of a practice we are reflecting upon, or the excellence of a grace or duty to which he is moving us: and so we shall by his word cultivate and cherish his gracious motion.

And when we are convinced that the suggestion is good, and therefore from him, our business is ready compliance; that we suffer not corrupt inclinations to stifle it, nor allow excuses from humour or any temporal inconveniences; that we be not slothful, but immediately set ourselves to amend what is amiss, and to practise the duty we are convinced of. Happy they, who immediately obey the heavenly motion, as soon as they are convinced of its original! who are led by him, wherever they perceive him to be

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their guide; and give up themselves to be conducted by him to the utmost heights of goodness, to which he would carry them! This is *walking after the Spirit* in the most excellent sense. Such souls shall not fail to be filled with him in an eminent measure.

The *third* general head remains to be considered, *viz.*

III. The obligations which lie upon Christians to aim at this.

I have prevented myself in much that might have been offered upon this head, by what hath been already suggested concerning the desirableness of it. I shall only now propose the following considerations.

1. The clear revelation we have received concerning his agency, beyond the former ages of the church, lays us under a further engagement to seek after him, and a large share of his influences and fruits. When such a benefit is set in full view, shall it not excite desire and ambition to obtain the most of him that we can? Hath he discovered so much of himself in his own revelation, and of his willingness to do the kindest offices for us? Must not the design of this be to attract our hearts? And shall he be neglected and made light of, in any part of the offers he hath made us? Shall we know more of the Spirit, and yet have less of him, than many saints under the Old Testament? How unworthy and unbecoming will this be? 2. The

2. The dignity of his person should make us ambitious of such a guest, when he is willing to dwell with us. He is no less than the *Spirit of God*: and the apostle tells us, in what sense he is so; just as our souls are the spirit of a man; and as perfectly conscious of the things of God, as the spirit of a man is of the things of a man; and therefore entirely furnished to make us know the singular gifts of his rich grace, which were hidden before, but now made manifest in the Gospel, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12. *God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.* St. Paul here tells us, that the things of God, made known in the Gospel, were such as none but God was privy to, till he revealed them by his Spirit. But his Spirit as fully knew them, as a man's spirit is conscious of that which passes within him, which no other man knows: and he revealed those deep things of God to the apostles, and by them to the world. Now it is this same Spirit of God, that is proposed to us as the divine agent in our breasts, who is as intimately conscious of the things of God, as the

spirit of a man is conscious of the things in a man. If he dwells in us, God dwells in us; we are the habitation of God, as far as we are the habitation of the Spirit. How should every saint aspire then to be full of God, of his light, and love, and likeness?

3. His relation to Christ obliges Christians to aim at the fullest participation of him. He is eminently styled *the Spirit of Christ*, Rom. viii. 9. Gal. iv. 6. for he is one of the most eminent fruits of his purchase; one of the principal blessings which it was in his kind heart to obtain for us, when he stooped to the lowest abasement for our sakes. He was *made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith*, Gal. iii. 13, 14. He esteemed the Spirit more advantageous for us, than the continuance of his own bodily presence with his church, *John xvi. 7*. And as he undertook to *pray the Father* at his entrance into heaven for the actual sending of this *Comforter*, *John xiv. 16*. so when he was ascended on high, he gave this gift unto men. And the Spirit's province is directly to supply Christ's room, to be *another Comforter*; to pursue Christ's work, applying the benefits of his purchase to souls, and so to glorify him, *John xvi. 14*. *He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*. If then we have a value for our blessed Master, if we think that he has provided well for our interest; we should desire to be filled with

with the Spirit, which will be most pleasing and honourable to him, and he assures us will be most profitable to ourselves.

4. Our relation to Christ will be most clearly proved by this. If we are destitute of this grace of the Spirit prevailing in us, Christ will not own us for his, *Rom. viii. 9. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* He cannot be his, for our union with Christ is by his Spirit, *1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, being animated with one soul; so also is Christ: for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* Alluding to the two christian sacraments, which all Christians are commanded to observe in token of their union to Christ the head, and to all the other members of his body. What those signs do figuratively, the one Spirit that animates them all, does really. Our relation to Christ will be more or less evident, in proportion to the degrees of our participation of his Spirit. A solid joy in Christ cannot be full, unless we are filled with the Spirit; because where that joy is right, it is one of the Spirit's fruits, and therefore must rise or fall in proportion to his influences. And he is not used to give strong consolation, where he has not
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formed eminent graces. Confident assurance without this, is indeed a very suspicious thing.

5. By this means we shall be *vessels of honour, sanctified and mete for our master's use*, 2 Tim. ii. 21. And we can never be so otherwise. We shall be, like the vessels of the temple, fit to be employed by him for sacred uses; furnished to every good work, under his light, quickening, and culture; and prepared to bear any suffering well, if the Spirit of God rest upon us, animating us with fortitude and comfort answerable to our day. This has carried the feeble sex and tender youth triumphant through death in all his terrors, and the most exquisite contrivances to shock flesh and blood. And should it not be the point of honour, to which every servant of Christ should aspire, that he may acquit himself to the fullest approbation and glory of his blessed Lord?

6. *So an entrance will be ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. i. 11. We shall be in a good measure ripe for heaven, by the time that we come thither; able to look forward to it as a blessed hope, and to comfort ourselves with the prospect in all the uneasinesses to nature and grace which now attend us. Our actual passage from one world to the other is like to be serene and joyful; for what evil have we to fear, if God is
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with us in that valley by his Spirit? That will almost make it a valley of vision, as the gate of heaven. And when we come there, distinguishing rewards will be conferred. Those eminently filled with the Spirit now, will be capable of receiving a greater fulness of glory, as the Scripture most frequently assures us that it is prepared for them.

Upon the whole then,

1. We are led by this subject, as indeed we may be almost by every theme of divine meditation, to admire the wisdom and the grace of the evangelical dispensation. It excites both sinners and saints to *work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*: but yet with hope, *because it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. It provides effectually for the honour of free and powerful grace, and yet at the same time for the encouragement of reasonable creatures to shew themselves men, and to exert all the powers which their Maker has given them.

2. The imperfection of saints ought to be no disparagement to christianity, but it is a great disgrace and shame to themselves. The Gospel contains the most perfect precepts, and exhibits to us a complete example, and furnishes us with every motive fit to strike any affection which God has given us. But no motive is stronger or more distinguishing from every other institution, than the discovery

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very of the blessed Spirit, able and willing to aid our weakness, and supply our wants for every part of obedience, and never unready to furnish an upright mind for the highest possible advances in universal goodness. He would fill us, but we will not be filled by him. We too often neglect him, and grieve him, and quench him, and resist him; and was it not for his singular grace, should be given over by him for ten thousand misbehaviours, so as never to have *the good pleasure of divine goodness fulfilled in us, or the work of faith with power.* Our faces should be over-spread with a penitent confusion at the thought; while our mouths are filled with praise for his condescension and grace, that he will yet continue a teacher to such unapt scholars, a guide to such heedless followers, a principle of perfection, and an earnest of the inheritance, to souls so unlike him and so unmete for the promised reward.

3. The proper temper prescribed by christianity toward the Holy Spirit, is evident from these discourses. To own him with thankfulness as the author of all spiritual good found in man in his fallen state. To believe his ability and readiness to help us according to our wants. To receive his testimony in his word, and hearken to every good motion in our minds conformable to it, as proceeding from him. To pray for and depend upon his grace in the whole course of life, in the performance

Serm. xvi. *Be filled with the Spirit.* 349

performance of every duty, in our conflict with every sin, and in our endeavours to cultivate every grace and virtue. To be deeply humbled, wherever we have treated him unworthily. And under his gracious influences, to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and Spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.*

S E R-

S E R M O N XVII.

 The Spirit of Bondage, and
 the Spirit of Adoption.

R O M. viii. 15.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

CH R I S T I A N S are described in the former part of this chapter by several phrases which bespeak their relation to the Blessed Spirit. They *walk after the Spirit*, ver. 1, 4. They *are after him*, and *mind the things of the Spirit*, ver. 5. They *are in the Spirit*, ver. 9. and *he dwells in them*, ver. 9, 11. *Through him they mortify the deeds of the body*, ver. 13. and they *are led by him*, ver. 14. Which various phrases intimate on the one hand a special presence and stated agency of the divine Spirit in the minds of believers: and on the other

other hand, that the prevailing temper of their spirits and tenour of their lives are moulded and fashioned into a holy conformity to him; they *are after him* in disposition, and *walk after him* in course; they *mind* and relish most the things which he dictates and is pleased with; they make use of his aids for carrying on the purposes of the divine life; and are willingly *led* by him as their guide, whither he would carry them.

Blessed souls! who partake of such a guest and guide, and are disposed by his grace so to treat and use him. For they *are in Christ Jesus*, and so *there is no condemnation to them*, ver. 1. They *shall live*, live eternally, ver. 13. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*, ver. 14. Their participation of him brings them into a filial relation to God; and their being led in so kindly a manner by him, is a proof of that relation, and consequently of their being heirs to the heavenly inheritance. In confirmation of which, the words of the text are added: *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* Which is a proof of their being admitted for the sons of God, from the free and liberal manner of the Spirit's influence upon them, and the correspondent temper produced in them. If they had received the Spirit of bondage, that would
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not evidence their being sons, but only servants; but now it was plain, that they were adopted by God for his sons, because they had received the spirit of adoption, and not of bondage.

But what are we to understand by *the spirit of bondage unto fear*, and *the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*?

For the general nature of them; by the *spirit of bondage* is plainly meant such a temper and spirit toward God, as slaves usually have to their masters; which leads them chiefly to be influenced by fear, or by an apprehension of the severity of their masters, and of the rod always hanging over them. Slaves are commonly good for nothing, but when they are handled with rigour, and swayed to subjection and obedience by the terror of present punishment. To this the apostle opposes the *spirit of adoption*. He thought it not enough to say, the spirit of liberty, which the opposition seemed to require; but more emphatically, the spirit of adoption. Servants might be made free, and often were so among the *Romans*, without being taken for sons; but Christians are made more than bare freemen, even sons; and therefore they have a filial spirit, such as sons have: a spirit, which sways them not only or mainly by fear, but by love to God as their Father; an ingenuous disposition, and a liberal boldness and confidence. By virtue of this *they cry,*

cry, Abba, Father. The two words signify the same thing. *Abba* in *Syriac* is *father*, or *my father*; *πατήρ* the same in *Greek*. Christ had used both these words in his agony, *Mark* xiv. 36. and possibly the apostle chose to use both in conformity to him, to bespeak the more fully, that is was *the Spirit of his Son* which *God sent into their hearts*, as in *Gal.* iv. 6. Or, when he was speaking of the common privilege of believing Jews and Gentiles, he would signify that glory of the evangelical state by repeating it in both languages: in the *Syriac*, which was the common language of the Jews at that time in *Judea*; and in *Greek*, which was so much us'd in the Gentile world. Or it may be he only doubles the word for the greater emphasis. I need not say, that by their *crying, Abba, Father*, under the influence of the Spirit, the bare pronouncing of the words is not all intended; but all that disposition of mind toward him, which becomes the relation; a filial affection and manner of application, and a childlike frame in the performance of duty.

But still it may be enquired; what sort of persons, or what period of time the apostle refers to, wherein the servile spirit prevailed, in distinction from the filial spirit.

And I think it is plain, that he designs the one eminently for the character of those under the law, and the other of those under the Gospel. When he says in general to the

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believing *Romans*, that they had not received the one, but the other; he must be understood to speak of a thing belonging to Christians in common, and not of that which is peculiar to some. In the spirit of bondage he would express the state of the *Jewish* church under the discipline of the Mosaic law. That dispensation is upon many accounts in the New Testament represented as a state of bondage, and as leading to a servile spirit. But the greater grace of the Gospel more directly leads to a filial spirit. And so the participation of the spirit, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*, is directly opposed by this same apostle writing to the *Galatians*, to the state of the church under the law; as we shall see presently.

The sense of the words may be included in this observation,

That the temper, to which we are led by christianity, is not such a servile spirit, as that which prevailed under the law; but a spirit of adoption, leading us to consider God, and to act toward him as a Father.

In the consideration of this truth, I shall shew,

I. In what sense it is made the character of those under the law, to have received the spirit of bondage; and of those under the Gospel, to have received the spirit of adoption.

II. How

II. How the Old Testament dispensation contributed to a servile spirit; and how on the contrary, the Gospel leads to a filial temper.

III. How therefore our deliverance from the one, and our participation of the other, should influence us.

I. It will be proper to shew, in what sense it is made the character of those under the law, to have received the spirit of bondage; and of those under the Gospel, to have received the spirit of adoption. It is needful the sense of this should be stated: For,

We must not suppose, that the sincere members of the church of God under the Old Testament were destitute of the agency of the same spirit of God, as is communicated under the New: He was the author and spring of sanctification to all good men then, as well as now. Nor were the saints of those times altogether without a share in his influences to produce in them a filial temper. *David* in his *Psalms* plainly shews a great deal of such a disposition.

On the other hand, it cannot be said that all under the Gospel, even all sincere Christians, express a more filial temper, than some saints did under the Old Testament. Nor is all fear unsuitable to the evangelical spirit. We are required by the Gospel itself, to *serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear,*

Heb. xii. 28. to *pass the time of our sojourn-
ing here in fear*, and that because *we call on
the Father*, 1 Pet. i. 17. to *work out our sal-
vation with fear and trembling*, Phil. ii. 12:
and because *a promise is left us of entering into
rest, therefore to fear, lest we should seem to
come short of it*, Heb. iv. 1. There is still
room for a reverential fear, and no small use
to a Christian of some fear of punishment,
as long as he sojourns below.

But when the apostle mentions these as the
distinguishing characters of the two dispensa-
tions, I apprehend he intends *two things*.

1. To express what the two dispensations
mainly and most naturally lead to; or, what
I may call the most proper and distinguishing
genius of each. The covenant, into which
God entered with the *Jews* on mount *Sinai*,
gendred unto bondage, Gal. iv. 24. this was
its proper tendency. But the Gospel most
directly leads men to a childlike temper, and
lays in sufficient provision for it. As far as
any thing of a filial disposition appeared in
some' faints under the Old Testament, it was
not owing to the influence of the Mosaical
law; but to the view they had beyond their
neighbours of the grace of the Gospel, by the
light of the promise. And tho' the Gospel
is not intended to extinguish fear, yet it more
strongly leads to love: and as far as a mere
servile spirit governs in any good men under
the Gospel, this arises not from any defect

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in the Gospel to inspire them with more generous principles ; but either is owing to their mistaken apprehensions about the Gospel or about themselves, or to the weakness of their faith in the revelation they have, or to such an imperfection in their obedience as makes their sincerity questionable, or to the distemper of their bodies. The law in its nature terrified; the Gospel contains what is fit to relieve every upright mind against those terrors.

2. To describe the dispositions ordinarily prevailing in fact, under both dispensations. A servile spirit more usually governed people under the law; but a spirit of adoption is more generally and in larger measures communicated to believers now, suitable to the more exalted and refreshing discoveries of the Gospel. The apostle very elegantly represents this in *Gal.* iv. wherein he makes the difference between believers before Christ's coming and those since, to be like that of an heir in his nonage, and an heir grown up to maturity, ver. 1, 2. *Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, tho' he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors, till the time appointed of the father.* Tho' the child in his minority may be intitled to an estate by the will of his father; yet he is not actual master of it, but kept in subjection to those to whom the management of him is left, till the time comes, which was fixed by his fa-

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ther's will, for his receiving the possession and
management of the estate himself. *Even so*
ver. 3. *we, when we were children, we Jews,*
when we were under the legal dispensation,
were in bondage under the elements of the
world; as in a servile state, under the law as
our schoolmaster. Ver. 4. *But when the ful-*
ness of time was come, time designed by our
heavenly Father for bringing his church to
its fullest liberty and greatest perfection in this
world; then *God sent forth his Son, made of*
a woman, made under the law. To what
end? *To redeem them that were under the*
law; to redeem the *Jews* upon their faith
in Christ from the rigour and servitude of the
law: *That we might receive the adoption of*
sons, ver. 5. That we Christians, whether
Jew or Gentile, might be admitted to the
privileges of the sons of God. And ver. 6.
because ye are sons, just as in the text, *God*
hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our
hearts, crying, or disposing us to cry, *Abba,*
Father. Here the antient church, tho' de-
clared to be heirs of the same promises, yet
are described as under age, and in a state liker
to that of servants than of children; but in
opposition to that, by Christ's actual coming
and being made under the law, provision is
made, that we should receive the privileges
which belong to sons come of age. So the
apostle's argument requires that we should
understand him, and so he expressly sums up
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the case himself, ver. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.* It is observable, that we find not the saints before Christ's coming, ordinarily and directly calling God Father in their applications to him, but addressing to him as Lord or God, or by some such appellation. But Christ directs us to this as the ordinary view we are to take of him under the Gospel, *Our Father, who art in heaven.*

We see then in what sense we Christians may be said not to have received the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption. All who are favoured with the Gospel-revelation, have therein received such a discovery of the mind of God, as is fit to cure them of a servile spirit, and to dispose them to the temper of sons; and in proportion to the advances of this latter disposition in us, so much the more we correspond with the evangelical state, and act worthy of the children of God.

II. I am to shew how the dispensation of the Mosaical law contributed to a servile spirit; and how, on the contrary, the Gospel leads to a filial temper. The following instances will abundantly manifest this.

1. The manner of introducing both dispensations, was a natural prelude to the different tendencies of them.

The Mosaical dispensation was ushered in a way apt to produce dread and terror. If we look so far back as to the first credentials

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given to *Moses* in *Egypt*, in the miracles he was enabled to work there to prove his mission from God; we shall find them miracles of terrible punishment and vengeance. But the miracles of *Jesus*, all breathed grace and benignity to mankind; highly suitable to the glad tidings which he was to publish.

If we come nearer, to the actual delivery of the law on mount *Sinai*, the apostle has summed up the circumstances of terror accompanying it, in *Heb. xii. 18, 19*. It was given out from a mount that could not be touched, and that burned with fire; with blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet; and the voice of words, which they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. A chain of circumstances, proper to introduce a law of bondage. The author and finisher of our faith, though so much greater than *Moses*, chose not with his terrors to make us afraid; but veiled the glory of his divinity, and spoke to men in fashion as a man, in the most familiar way, and without any thing apt to make such affrighting impressions. This was perfectly agreeable to the kind and gracious subject of his errand, as the giving of the law was with a pomp of terror suitable to its nature: For,

2. The law was the ministration of condemnation; but the Gospel the ministration of righteousness. So the apostle opposes them,

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2 Cor. iii. 9. *The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,* John i. 17.

In the Mosaical law God was pleased to revive and represent anew to the people of *Israel* that original law, for the substance of it, which had been delivered at first to mankind, and that in all the strictness of its terms, and with all the rigour of its sanctions; and so to make it a part of their national covenant. Such the moral law was, of which the ten commands are a summary. And promises and threatnings were annexed, in such a strain as if man had been still innocent. *Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,* says St. Paul, Rom. x. 5. *that the man which doth these things, shall live by them;* (referring to *Levit. xviii. 5.*) *i. e.* he who doth them perfectly. On the other hand, the threatnings were in the same rigorous strain, *Gal. iii. 10. As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;* referring to *Deut. xxvii. 26.*

The church indeed had then a promise of the Messiah, which might relieve them against this condemning sentence of the law. This promise had been given out upon the fall, and often renewed afterwards, particularly to *Abraham* four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law; and therefore, as
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the apostle argues from this priority of the promise, *the law could not disannul the covenant* [with Abraham] *that it should make the promise of none effect*, Gal. iii. 17. If it should then be asked, *wherefore then served the law*; the same apostle answers, *ver. 19. It was added to the promise, because of transgressions*: to shew men their transgressions and the desert of them, and so to lead them to value the promise; and to put some check and restraint upon all in the practice of sin from the terror of punishment.

Now where the law had the most kindly effect, to recommend the promise, yet it was only by being first the administration of condemnation to them, *i. e.* convincing them of their miserable state without the relief of the promise. The law itself could go no farther. But it had quite another effect upon the generality: they so attended to this new constitution of the law, as to lose sight of the promise; and to them it was a ministration of condemnation in the worst sense, *Rom. ix. 31, 32. Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.* While they looked upon the law as a practicable method of sinners justification before God, they missed their end: *Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith in the promised Messiah, who was the end of the law for righteousness; but as it were by the works of the law; i. e. merely by such*
imperfect

imperfect obedience as they performed to the demands of the law. And though the law might lay some restraint upon them in their sins, yet this could proceed only from a servile spirit.

But while the Gospel explains the rule of man's duty in the greatest strictness and spirituality, it most expressly brings in view an everlasting righteousness. It discovers *Christ redeeming us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. The Gospel confirms the truth of this, that the moral law was holy, just and good, and denounced no more than was due for sin: the highest honour is paid to the law and the law-giver, by Christ's perfect obedience to it, and bearing the extremest sufferings for our violations of it. But at the same time provision is made by his perfect righteousness and satisfaction, for our justification by faith, and for the acceptance of our sincere, though imperfect obedience. This has the greatest tendency to produce an ingenuous disposition.

3. The manner and way of access to God under the two dispensations, must be understood to contribute to these different tempers.

There is another sort of freedom and liberty, to come at God under the Gospel, than was allowed under the law. All Christians are made *an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Every Christian hath

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a greater freedom of access to God now, than even the priests had under the law. The *Levites* might come nearer than the people: while the *Levites* were to pitch round the tabernacle in their marches in the wilderness, the body of the people must take care that they kept their distance, *lest wrath should come upon the congregation*, Numb. i. 52, 53. The priests might come nearer than the Levites: For the *Levites must not go in to see when the holy things were covered, lest they should die*, Numb. iv. 20. The ordinary priests might approach to the altar of burnt-offering to minister, *Exod. xxx. 20, 21.* but the high-priest only was allowed to enter into the holiest of all: and that not whenever he pleased, or at all times, on pain of death, *Lev. xvi. 2.* He had that liberty only once a year. At such a servile distance did God keep his church in those days, which would not fail to produce much of a servile spirit in them: *The Holy Ghost*, as the apostle tells us, *Heb. ix. 8. hereby signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing*; that the way of the freest and nearest access to God was not discovered and laid open to all, under the Jewish dispensation. But every Christian now has a privilege above the high-priest then. *We have boldness*, the same apostle affirms, *Heb. x. 19. to enter into the holiest*; to pierce heaven with our prayers, and come near to God

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at all times, as children to their father. We are exhorted to *come with boldness to the throne of grace in every time of need*, Heb. iv. 16.

And no wonder that there should be such a difference in the freedom of access, when it is in a way so much more excellent; for it is the glory and the comfort of the Gospel-dispensation, that we are taught to *have access unto the Father through Christ by one Spirit*, Eph. ii. 18.

The most solemn way of access to God under the law, was by sacrifices: but by what sacrifices? Not by such as could be supposed to have intrinsic value to atone for sin, to propitiate the Deity, or merit any favour at the hands of God. *The gifts and sacrifices then offered, could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*, Heb. ix. 9. The blood of bulls and of goats was a low compensation for the sin of man. The offering of such sacrifices by a priest, who must first offer for his own sins, was a poor acknowledgment of the rights of injured Godhead; and an awakened mind could hardly be satisfied with the intercession made by the offering of incense upon the altar by a priest that had infirmity. It is not strange, that a spirit of doubting and fear about the divine acceptance, should prevail under such a dispensation, where men could not look thro' the shadow to the substance, thro' the figures to the true sacrifice. *But we have boldness to*
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enter into the holiest, because by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x. 19. who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God; which is a sacrifice sufficient to purge our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God, chap. ix. 14. And because we have such an high-priest as became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, chap. vii. 26. And being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, than that in which the legal high-priest officiated, namely his own body, which was a tabernacle not made with hands, but immediately prepared by God; neither by the blood of goats and of calves, but by his own blood, entred in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, chap. ix. 11, 12. and appears in the presence of God for us, in heaven the true holy place, ver. 24. having much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne, Rev. viii. 3. This is a very different sort of encouragement to come to God as a Father, from what Old Testament saints had; when we are to ask in such a name, and to transmit our addresses by such a hand.

The discovery of the Spirit, as another medium of access, farther contributes to our freedom in it. That his powerful assistances to help our infirmities are made known, is itself a great evidence of God's willingness to hold

hold a correspondence with us. These were neither so clearly revealed, nor so generally granted, before the coming of Christ. But all the parts of his office, as described in the Gospel, serve either to animate us to draw near to God, or to furnish us for it and aid us in it.

4. The difference between the law and Gospel, as to burdensom rites and ceremonies, and the rigour of their injunction, is to be considered as having an influence upon these different tempers.

Under the law, a vast multitude of ceremonial observances was prescribed, which from the number and nature of them were very difficult to be observed. Many of them were arbitrary precepts, which had no intrinsic goodness, nor any tendency in themselves to spiritual advantage. Others were obscure and figurative; shadows indeed of good things to come, but the substance and design of which was hid from the generality. And yet the observance of these was enjoined in a very awful manner. The omission of what was prescribed by these laws, or even a defect in observing the minute circumstances of some of them, was made a capital crime, or exposed them to be cut off from the congregation. This could hardly fail to keep those who were conscientious, in much anxiety and solicitude, when it was extremely hard to observe them in every punctilio, and even to know when they had observed some of them aright. The
apostle

apostle stiles one of them, circumcision, a yoke which the fathers were not able to bear. Acts xv. 10. And the whole together, a yoke of bondage. Gal. v. 1. And he tells us, that before the fulness of time, they were in bondage under the elements of the world, chap. iv. 3. which he farther calls in ver. 9. weak and beggarly elements.

But Christians are called to liberty, by an intire release from this heavy burden; a liberty, wherewith Christ hath made them free, Gal. v. 1. He hath blotted out this handwriting of ordinances, which was against us; and took it away, nailing it to his cross, Col. ii. 14. Instead of such a cumbersome form of rituals, we are called to worship God in spirit and in truth; in a way more agreeable to his nature as a spirit, John iv. 24. and directly perfective of our own. Christ's whole religion is a reasonable service; the things which he directs us to lay a stress upon, are evidently for his honour and our happiness. And for positive institutions, he hath enjoined but two, baptism and the Lord's-supper; plain in their design, instructive in their nature, easy in their observance, pledges of his grace, and engagements to our duty. An admirable state of things, to lead to an ingenuous disposition.

5. The difference in the motives to obedience, principally made use of in the two dispensations, contributed to make a difference in temper. The

The representations made of God by the law, were more in characters of majesty, of power and justice, than of grace and mercy; as ready to cut them off, and denouncing death for every disobedience; which awakened their dread, and set them upon action to escape his severity. And what rewards were proposed for their encouragement, were of present temporal blessings, of the enjoyment of good things in the land of *Canaan*. Good men indeed all along had higher and better prospects of a future happiness; but they were much more obscure and imperfect, left more to be collected by a train of consequences, and not so directly proposed by the Mosaical law, or inculcated in it, as the present bounties of providence to the obedient. This naturally fed the earthly mind of that people, who were principally influenced by the motives most conspicuous in the body of the law itself.

But the Gospel sets God before us in the brightest displays of his grace, giving his Son for us, and with him freely giving us all things; extending his good-will to mankind in general, and exercising his sovereignty in full harmony with every other beautiful perfection; especially making them all to consist with the richest instances of mercy. He excites our gratitude, by delivering us from a bondage unspeakably worse than that of *Israel* in *Egypt*; and animates our obedience by the clear prospect of

an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. This is the chief motive of the Gospel, shining in every page of it, and its most proper sanction; temporal motives being only proposed in it as on the by and at second hand: The reverse of which was the case under the law. Now this has the most direct tendency to promote the obedience of sons, when we are called to perform it in the immediate view of the inheritance belonging to us as sons.

6. The different light afforded as to the main privileges of saints, made those of the Old Testament comparatively under a spirit of bondage, and makes those of the New under the spirit of adoption. *The heir*, says the apostle, *while a child, differeth nothing from a servant*: possibly he knows not what an estate he is heir to; at least he has yet but a very imperfect apprehension of it, in comparison of what he will have at maturity. Such is the difference between saints under the two dispensations; somewhat like the difference between saints on earth and saints in heaven; as the apostle *John* describes those on earth, *1 John* iii. 2. *Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.* Now we stand in that relation, but in this world we cannot discern the full blessedness included in it. So also to look backward, it might be said of saints of old, compared with us: they were the sons of God, the substantial

tial privileges of the covenant belonged to them; but they had not such a distinct knowledge of them as we have. Many righteous men desired to see them more fully, but could not. Even the prophets themselves searched diligently to understand the meaning of their own prophecies, but they were left much in the dark about them; for *it was revealed to them, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto us by them that have preached the Gospel,* 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. The least Christian in the kingdom of Christ hath opportunity to know these matters more distinctly, than even such a man as *John the Baptist*. Herein God treats us more suitable to the filial relation, and so in a way more apt to produce filial affection. Upon this account Christ tells his disciples, that he treated them as friends rather than servants, *John xv. 15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.*

7. The agency of the divine Spirit was and is more generally correspondent to these different dispensations. His actings upon the minds of men, where he has given a revelation, are by means of that revelation, and suitable to it. And therefore, as the law delivered to the *Jews* gendred more to bondage, his influences might be expected to

promote a temper less filial, agreeable to the materials which then were to be made use of. But now, when he hath made known to the world, by the standing revelation of the Gospel, *the things which God had laid up for them that love him, which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had entred into the heart of man* before; his most frequent operations in the hearts of good men, are conformable to that greater light and love, as a comforter, as the earnest of the inheritance, as the Spirit of Grace. When the external veil that was upon the law, is taken off by the full revelation of the Gospel; then it is no wonder, that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, in his inward agency, there is liberty,* 2 Cor. iii. 13, 17.

And now, the advantages of the evangelical state, both for holiness and comfort, appear from what has been said, to be exceeding great, and worthy of enlarged thankfulness.

Those who have hitherto received the joyful sound only with the hearing of the ear, and not with the obedience of faith, surely should lay to heart their advantageous circumstances, not only beyond the blind state of the heathen world, but even the more servile condition of God's antient visible church. The cords of divine love, with which you are drawn, are much more numerous and forcible: and if you should be still insensible, and
resolved

resolved to continue in the chains of sin ; by how much the richer the offers of grace are, so much the darker must be your prospect, because they bespeak you to be beyond all hopeful methods of cure. *If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ?* Heb. ii. 2, 3.

But if you have by the Gospel received the Spirit to saving purposes, it becomes you often to think of the improved state of the church in which you are placed, and studiously to act up to the privilege you are admitted to, in being released from the legal spirit of bondage, and made partakers of the spirit of adoption. How that is to be done, will be the subject of the next discourse.

S E R M O N XVIII.

The Spirit of Bondage, and
the Spirit of Adoption.

R O M. viii. 15.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

I Proceed to the *third* general head proposed on these words,

III. To shew how our deliverance from the spirit of bondage, and our having received the spirit of adoption by the Gospel, should influence us.

We are released from the bonds of that legal dispensation, which had a visible tendency to promote a servile spirit; and have received the discoveries of Gospel-grace, representing the love of God as our heavenly Father, and leading us to a more filial disposition. Now

to what does this consideration of our case engage us? What should be the effect of this change of circumstances to the church of God?

The apostle may be understood as summing this up in the words that close the verse: *Hereby we cry, Abba Father.* That is, we consider God hereupon chiefly in the endearing relation of a father, and our temper and behaviour is filial. We are concerned to see, that we *have* a filial disposition, and then that we *exercise* and *express* it in proper instances.

1. We are concerned to see, that we *have* a filial temper; or, that an ingenuous affection to God as a Father, be the prevailing disposition of our souls, suitable to the genius of the Gospel; rather than a mere servile fear, suited to a state of bondage. Though all, upon whom Gospel-light shines, have advantages for a filial temper, yet how many *receive this grace of God in vain?*

This is evidently the case of all, who still continue under the bondage of sin. They are destitute of any kindly love to the God of love, tho' the riches of his grace are set in their view. If conscience forces them to pay some regards to God, it is only as the most abject slave regards his master; with disaffection and ill-will, merely from the terror of vengeance; with injurious thoughts of God, and a dislike of him and his service.

If they could help it, if they could rid themselves of the fear of punishment, they would have nothing to do with him. *The carnal mind*, which governs them, *is enmity against God*, and they are *alineaed from the life of God*. Indeed the respect they pay with such an heart, is little better than the poor *Indians* worshipping the devil, for fear lest he should hurt them. The judge will pronounce to their confusion in the great day, as he did of many of his *Jewish* hearers during his abode below, *I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you*, John v. 42. A soul altogether destitute of the love of God, could not be acceptable to him in any dispensation; for it was *the first and great commandment* of the moral law, that we should *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind*.

But to have the true spirit of adoption, suitable to the discoveries of divine grace in the Gospel, is not only to have an affection to God; but to have this prevailing above uneasy and tormenting fears of him.

I say not, to be altogether without fear.
For,

A reverential fear of him, importing a high regard and veneration for his excellencies, for his authority and government, is a natural duty. It was the temper of man in innocence, it is the proper disposition of a son, and will be the unchangeable frame of the blessed

fed in heaven. The New as well as the Old Testament often sums up religion in it. While there is an infinite distance between God and us, this must ever become us; for it is nothing else but a practical acknowledgment of that distance.

Nor are the fears of God's fatherly displeasure in this life, either in outward corrections or in spiritual judgments, to be extinguished in the minds of Christians. The New Testament leads us to expect these, if we turn again to folly; and without doubt on purpose to keep awake a fear of caution.

Nor are we discharged in this imperfect state from all fear of hell itself. Amidst the various temptations of life, and while our love to God and conformity to him are very incomplete, we shall have reason, tho' we have hope that we are in the way to heaven, to entertain such a sense of danger, as there will be no room for when our warfare is accomplished. The threatnings left upon record in the Gospel to apostates, are intended for the admonition of the best; and frequent thoughts of such threatnings are means of their security, and of exciting the caution and diligence necessary to their perseverance. To consider, that if we shall draw back, it would be unto perdition; to think of the importance of the matter, of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the instability of our resolutions; justly raises and maintains some fear in the best

best during their state of probation: such a fear as can have no place in those who are lodged past all danger.

But reverential fear and filial affection are things perfectly harmonious. And for the fear of threatened evils, tho' neither the obligation, nor the usefulness of it to Christians on earth, is entirely set aside by the Gospel; yet there is sufficient provision made against its being tormenting, and for overbalancing it with the sense of God's fatherly love. Such a fear, as arises from a distrust of God and his promises, as if it was a doubtful thing whether God loves a soul that loves him, whether his grace will be sufficient for us, or whether he will give eternal life to every persevering believer; such a fear, I say, is injurious to God, and most unsuitable to the love of God revealed in the Gospel. In order to get above such fears, we should often contemplate the riches of his grace in Christ, and look up to him to kindle and inflame in our breasts an ingenuous affection answerable to such discoveries. And then the more a love to God, founded upon such views of him, grows up in us, the more we shall have of the true spirit of adoption; and all uneasy fears will proportionably abate, till they be intirely extinguished by the advance of our love to perfection. This is elegantly represented by St. *John*, 1 *John* iv. 16. *We have known and believed the love that God hath to*

us, his love and grace manifested to us in Christ. Here is the foundation; for hence we know, that *God is love*, not a hard master, but a loving father, full of unspeakable goodwill and benignity: *and he that dwelleth in love*, in the believing view of this love of God, and in the ingenuous actings of love to him thereupon, *dwelleth in God, and God in him*. There is a sweet society between God and such a soul; he dwelleth in God by delightful contemplation, and God dwells in him by the spirit of his grace. If you would know, what effect this will have upon tormenting fears, it may be seen in ver. 18. *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath tormented; he that feareth is not made perfect in love.* A Christian's love being founded on the sense of God's great love to us in Christ, as far as that prevails, it will cast out tormenting fear; for such a fear arises from a sense of guilt, and of God's just anger for it, against which the love of God in the Gospel gives sufficient relief to all those who sincerely love him. If then we loved God perfectly; we should be free from any dismal and affrighted suspicions of his penal displeasure, the soul would be quieted by it: so it is in heaven; perfect love there casts out all uneasy fear. And it is a sign of the great imperfection of our love now, that our doubts and fears, and black apprehensions of God are so many. But yet
in

in proportion to the advance of our love, it will lessen our dread. And this temper, correspondent to the present liberal state of the church, we should be concerned to have.

2. We should see, that we *exercise* and *express* such a temper; or that we act from ingenuous love to God as our principle, rather than from a servile dread and terror, in the course of the christian life. That our temper and walk may shew, that we are governed by a spirit of adoption, and not of bondage. St. Paul exhorts, *Col. iii. 15. Let the peace of God rule in your heart.* Let it be the grand principle of action with you. Particularly we should discover a filial spirit, instead of the servile.

(1) In acts of worship. In our coming to God, which is most directly pointed at in the text.

By the frequency of our approaches. A slave cares not how seldom he comes near his master, but would rather be from under his eye. An ingenuous son, who has found his father kind and indulgent, loves to be in his company. Such should be the temper of Christians to God. Servile fear drives men from him, so that they care not to come at him. Such an effect it had upon our first parents, as soon as they were fallen, *Gen. iii. 8. They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the*
the

the Lord God, among the trees of the garden.

They would gladly have avoided converse with him, which in innocence was their highest delight. But a soul animated with the lively sense of divine grace to sinners, and attracted thereby to uniting affection, cannot live without God in the world. He enquires where he may meet with God, and gladly embraces every opportunity of converse.

By delight and pleasure, when we approach. The servile spirit, when pushed on by conscience to some acts of seeming devotion, is like *Doeg, detained before the Lord*, 1 Sam. xxi. 7. But the filial is then in its proper element; and most of all, when there are the most lively actings of pious and devout affections.

By freedom and confidence in our approaches: Not indeed forgetting our distance. The ingenuity of a son maintains reverence; and most of all, when nearest his father. *If I be a Father, where is mine honour?* Mal. i. 6. Nor forgetting our unworthiness. The clearest and most impressive apprehensions of grace, will keep that freshest in our minds. But a freedom and confidence, arising from the belief of his fatherly benignity, of the sufficiency of Christ's mediation to recommend us, and to obtain any thing we need from God, and of the fulness and firmness of his promises, Upon such a foundation, we should go to God as children to a father; in all our wants believing

believing his ability and willingness to supply us, and therefore *being careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, making our requests known unto God*, Phil. iv. 6. With a persuasion of his superior wisdom ; as ingenuous children will reckon their father is a more competent judge than they are, what is best for them : so in cases where God hath not taught us to think that a thing is necessarily and immutably good for us, which is the case in all temporal concerns, we should leave it to him to judge what answer shall be given to our desires, with a full resignation. We should come expecting welcome from our father. *This is the confidence, that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*, 1 John v. 14, 15. The encouragement a loving father gives his child to come to him, the success he has met with on former occasions, animate him to a growing freedom. So it should be with us toward our heavenly Father. *Having liberty allowed us to enter into the holiest, we should thankfully make use of it, by drawing near with a true heart, and then with full assurance of faith*, Heb. x. 22. *Coming with boldness to him as on a throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help, in every time of need*, chap. iv. 16.

(2.) In

(2.) In acts of obedience and service.

The slave has commonly hard thoughts of his master, and no liking to his work. Either he despairs of pleasing him, because he has found him rigid and unkind; or injuriously thinks him so; and therefore is sullen, and will do nothing; as the wicked and slothful servant is described in the parable, *Mat. xxv. 24, 25. Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.* Utter despair will have the same effect in God's service. When the slave does any thing, he does it with an ill-will, merely because he is forced to it, and cannot expect to escape punishment without it. Hence the apostle saw it necessary to exhort christian converts, who were in a state of servitude to their earthly masters, *with good-will to do service, as to the Lord, and not to men,* Eph. vi. 5. And ordinarily the slave will do as little as he can, consistent with hopes of escaping the lash; for he loves neither his master nor his service.

The very reverse of this should be the temper of Christians in their obedience to their heavenly Father. They should engage in it with good and honourable thoughts of God, agreeable to the discoveries made by the Gospel, that he is most easily pleased by an upright mind; that *if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not*

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not according to that he hath not, 2 Cor. viii.
12. With a firm persuasion of their acceptance
in it through Christ, and of the glorious re-
wards of grace which he has promised to con-
fer. They should *be stedfast, unmoveable,*
and always abounding in the work of the Lord,
forasmuch as they know that their labour is
not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Act-
ing with an eye to the recompence of reward,
is not a servile or mercenary principle, but
the very filial temper prescribed by the Gos-
pel; which leads us to the love of God upon
the discovery of his paternal love in provid-
ing us the inheritance of sons.

Every duty hereupon should be performed
with chearfulness and delight. *God loves a*
cheerful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 7. And so a chearful
servant in any other instance of obedience.
No constraint should be so strong, as the con-
straints of love, as *Paul* speaks, 2 Cor. v. 14,
15. *The love of Christ constraineth us, because*
we thus judge, that if one died for all, then
were all dead; and that he died for all, that
they which live, should not henceforth live unto
themselves, but unto him which died for them
and rose again. We should act in his service,
as those who esteem it perfect freedom: So
it will be reckoned, in proportion to the ad-
vances of divine love in us, 1 *John* v. 3. *This*
is the love of God that we keep his command-
ments, and his commandments are not grie-
vous. This displays true love to God, not
only

only that we are from some principle or other obedient, but that his commands are not accounted grievous.

We should prosecute our father's interest, as esteeming it our own. That is not the temper of a slave, but it is the disposition of a wise and ingenuous son; he has an interest in his father's interests, and he pursues them accordingly with the greater alacrity and diligence upon that consideration. So should it be with a Christian as to God's interests in the world.

And what our hand finds to do, we should do it with our might: *Heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men*, Col. iii. 23. Do our utmost in it. Not content ourselves just with so much goodness and duty, as we may imagine will secure from hell; but aspire at the utmost heights of grace and obedience, and aim at performing every service in the best manner we can, so that God may take the fullest complacency in it. This is filial obedience.

(3.) In sorrow for sin. This should be filial, and not merely servile, both in the reason and extent of it.

In the reason of it. When a slave has offended his master, he is only concerned for the punishment he receives or fears. If he escapes that, he is easy. But an ingenuous child is affected, not only because of the resentment his father has expressed or may express at his

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offence; but he is grieved that he has done a thing displeasing to a kind and loving father. This touches his heart, more than the punishment: if his father passes it by, this makes the deeper impression; and even when the father is reconciled, he knows not how to forgive himself. So should it be with Christians; *The goodness of God should lead them to repentance, Rom. ii. 4.* This especially should melt their hearts, and open the springs of godly sorrow. God declares himself to discover pardoning mercy for this very purpose, *Ezek. xvi. 63. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee.* And we have this ingenuous temper exemplified in the representation made of the prodigal son. After his father had shewn the greatest forwardness to be reconciled, and had given the most tender marks of actual reconciliation; *While the son was yet a great way off, the father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him:* yet after this, the next thing we read of the son is, that *he said to his father, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son,* Luke xv. 20, 21. Nothing shewed more the temper of a son, than his sense of unworthiness to be called so.

And then, in the extent of our sorrow. There should be a hearty concern for every
known

known offence, even those which may be esteemed inconsiderable by men, and which are hardly repented by many of a good character: yet if conscience tells a man they are against the mind of God, if he does but fear it, filial ingenuity will make his *heart* ready to *smite him*.

(4.) In bearing afflictions. A slave is never ready to take his master's corrections for kindness, but a child may: for this is the great inducement to a wise and tender father to use any rough methods with his child; it is putting a force upon himself to correct him, when he sees it necessary for his good. And yet sometimes an earthly parent's corrections may be the mere fruits of passion, and not of prudent affection; but a child of God may ever be assured, that his heavenly Father intends his benefit in the use of his rod. The apostle's assertion of this, and his argumentation upon it, is highly worthy of our notice, *Heb. xii. 6---10.* *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he, whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for*

a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now to believe this, that God does nothing unsuitable to the character of a loving Father, when he afflicts us, and that he always wisely and graciously consults our good therein, and to behave accordingly in distressing circumstances, is the proper expression of a filial temper. To suppress every murmuring word and thought cheerfully to submit to his will and wisdom in all, to put a good construction upon the darkest providences, still to love and trust in a correcting God, to deprecate his displeasure as far as that can be discerned, to believe that he means us well, and to wait with submission his time and way for deliverance: This is to act like a son of God.

(5.) In studious assimilation of mind and manners. A son, by being much with his father, from his reverential esteem of him, and the many endearments which at the same time he receives from him, naturally falls into a conformity of behaviour. And this is one way wherein the Scripture calls us to shew our relation to God, *Eph. v. 1. Be ye followers of God, as dear children.* 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. *As obedient children, not fashioning your selves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

(6.) In

(6) In love to all who appear to be children of the same father. *How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* Psal. cxxxiii. 1. Especially brethren by the adoption of our heavenly Father. The thought of their being beloved of him, should recommend them to our love; and if we truly love him, we should love his image in them. *Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him,* 1 John v. 1.

(7.) In the temper of our spirits in reference to dying. Where God is considered mainly as an object of fear and dread, death must be so too in proportion. Death came in as the wages of sin, and the sentence of an offended God for it; and in that view must be terrible to apostate creatures. And the relief discovered by the law was so imperfect, that good men then might be expected to have a greater dread of it remaining, than becomes saints under the Gospel, when Christ has been actually made a sacrifice to put away sin, and life and immortality are more fully brought to light. It was the very intention of Christ in *taking part of flesh and blood, by death, his own death, to deliver them who thro' fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage,* Heb. ii. 14, 15. to change the grim aspect of that last enemy, to reconcile his followers to it, and to induce them rather to wait for it as a friend to the children of God, the introduction to the inheritance of sons. Now a servile fear of it

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ill becomes the light and liberty of the Gospel. If still it be our dread merely from a fondness of life and of present things, how unworthy is that of the filial affection to God, to which his grace should constrain us? If the relief discovered by Christ is ineffectual to reconcile us to death, because of the weakness of our faith in that relief, we have then but a small share indeed, if any, of the spirit of adoption; for that is founded in our *believing the love that God hath to us*, as the Gospel makes it known, and can rise no higher than our faith. But if our terror arises from a doubt of our own interest in the Gospel-relief, the best way to remove that doubt, is to cultivate a love to God in our hearts by the frequent contemplation of his general love to sinners in Christ. If we love God, it is certain in itself that we are beloved of him, that we are the sons of God, and therefore that death and judgment will be most friendly things to us. And as love to God will breathe out in desires after the fullest enjoyment of him, so those very desires will gradually abate servile fears, and rise up to filial hope: and that *hope will not make ashamed, because the love of God to us is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*

For application of this subject,

1. Examine yourselves, how far you are partakers of a filial spirit and temper. There is somewhat of it in all the children of God;

I say

I say not, to the full of all the particulars mentioned. I have been describing, how an ingenuous love to God *should* express itself; but dare not say, that every one in the relation thus acts up to the relation. There is too much of a fervile spirit in all of them, of darkness, and weakness, and indisposition for the frame and behaviour worthy of so happy a state; and in some of the children of God more than in others: but may it not be said that such things as these are found in those of the lowest form?

They have at least such a persuasion of the general mercy of God in Christ to sinners, as gives them some hope. If they have many doubts of God's special love; yet they are enabled to put in a claim to him as the common Father, not only by creation, but by redemption. If they cannot appropriate a peculiar share to themselves, yet they put in for a general hope upon the declarations of divine grace to sinners. And though at times this hope runs low with them, yet it is never totally extinguished: the Spirit of God keeps it so far alive, that they do not utterly sink, And tho' they cannot live such comfortable lives as some other Christians, yet they live upon the feeble hope they have, and would not be without that upon any terms.

And they have so high an esteem for an assured relation to God, that they account them the happiest people in the world who have it; and earnestly desire it themselves.

They cannot keep away from God, but cry to him in all their wants and burdens, as a child would do to his father, even tho' they may fear a denial. If they are in *the depths*, yet *out of them they cry unto God*, Psalm cxxx. 1.

In their applications to God, they most earnestly desire the things that are suited to the new nature; which may be summed up in *grace and glory*.

And though they question their state, yet they are very tender of offending God themselves, and cannot bear to have him dishonoured by others. In their darkest hours they justify God; and will lay no blame upon him, but upon themselves.

And they continue their dependance upon God in a way of duty, though with a trembling heart.

These things bespeak a filial disposition, though distemper or darkness may cramp it. And would to God, such fruits as these were more conspicuous among those who enjoy the Gospel. Yet,

2. Every Christian should endeavour after the greatest heights and the noblest fruits of the spirit of adoption; to act more thoroughly upon the principles of ingenuity and liberal affection to his God and Father.

This is most suitable to the liberal and gracious dispensation we are under, as hath been shewn at large. *We are not under the law,*

law, but under grace, Rom vi. 14. As *sin* once reigned unto death, so now *grace* reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by *Jesus Christ our Lord*, chap. v. 21. And when grace reigns as the motive, love should reign as the principle.

It must be exceedingly pleasing to our heavenly Father. Is there any one who hath the bowels of a parent, and is not sensible how much greater the pleasure is, to have his children love him than merely fear him? and to have them respect and obey him upon affection, and as drawn by kindness, rather than be orderly only by the force of correction? So different must the complacency be, which our heavenly Father takes in the obedience of love, and that which is only the result of fear.

It may prevent the exercise of much severity, which otherwise it may be necessary for God to use. *He does not willingly afflict*, any more than a tender parent would do; he had rather draw with the cords of love and the bands of a man, than be forced to take his rod in his hands. It is only *if need be*, that for a season his servants are *in heaviness*, 1 Pet. i. 6. because they are not of so ingenuous a temper, as to be able to bear with safety an uniform course of smiling providences.

It would make the whole course of obedience abundantly more comfortable and pleasant to ourselves. The work of the christian

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stian life, in the servile spirit, will be all tedious and tiresome; it will go on heavily, because against the grain. But *wisdom's ways will be ways of pleasantness*, when we are pushed on by the generous principle of gratitude to walk in them; when we love him who sets us on work, and love the work itself as connatural to our souls.

It would adorn religion, and invite other people to embrace it. A Christian should be very solicitous for the reputation of religion, that *his good may not be evil-spoken of*, Rom. xiv. 16. but *his light may so shine before men, that others seeing his good works, may glorify his Father which is in heaven*, Matt. v. 16. Now though one man cannot certainly judge of the principle of another's acting; yet where there are the natural fruits of an ingenuous principle, such as, delight in approaching to God, cheerfulness, assiduity and vigour in holy obedience, patience, submission and thankfulness in an afflicted state, the amiable resemblance of God shining out in life, and a cheerful prospect of going to God in death; where, I say, the doctrine of God our Saviour is thus adorned, it commands attention, insinuates into mens affections, takes off their prejudices against religion, and shews them engaging pleasures in exchange for the pleasures of sin.

And, to add no more, the expressions of such a spirit, which we find even in some
Old

Old Testament saints, to a surprising degree in their more disadvantageous circumstances, should provoke our zeal. I will only take notice of one, holy *David*: How much of the gracious spirit breathes in his *Psalms*? How frequent and confident was he in his applications to God? *Evening and morning, and at noon I will pray; and he shall hear my voice*, Psalm lv. 17. *Seven times a day do I praise thee*, Psalm cxix. 164. *He loved the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelt*, Psalm xxvi. 8. He often pleads, relation to him, as his God and portion. *He would run the way of his commandments, when he should enlarge his heart*, Psalm cxix. 32. *He counted all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and hated every false way; and that in keeping God's commands there is great reward.* When he fell into sin, the offence against God sat heaviest on his mind, the offence given to his Spirit, and the loss of the joys of his salvation; *Psalm li.* When he was afflicted, he was dumb, and opened not his mouth, under the hand of God; and counted, that in very faithfulness he had afflicted him. How often does he pant after conformity to God? *His delight was in the excellent of the earth.* And viewing both worlds, God was to him all in all. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart jaileth;*
but

but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever, Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26. How should such a spirit, then, shame and inspire us? To see a poor man content, may justly shame the discontents of the great and the rich. To see the patience and piety of some in sickness and pain, should be a powerful restraint upon the peevish and fretful spirit of those who are at ease. And certainly the evangelical strains of some in that state of the church, which was comparatively a state of bondage, should strongly excite us who are brought into the liberty of the sons of God, to equal or out do them.

To this end then,

1. Accustom yourselves to the frequent contemplation of divine goodness, in creation, and in common providence; but especially as manifested in the face of Christ. This has often been successful, by the blessing of God, to carry good men above their distrustful fears to a free and evangelical temper.

2. Watch against every thing which tends to draw off your heart from God. Tho' it be ever so innocent in itself, yet when you discover it to be his rival for your affections, peculiarly guard against it, that it may not be suffered to have the ascendant. And on the other hand, diligently fall in with every thing which you find leading you to the love of God; such divine institutions, such converse, such particular discoveries of divine truth,

truth, as you experience to be most apt to make your hearts burn within you.

3. Daily pray for the light and aids of the Spirit of God, to *shed abroad his love in your hearts*, to solve your doubts, and satisfy you of your relation: that he would *direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ*, 2 Theff. iii. 5.

4. Set yourselves to act up to your hope as far as it goes, till you can proceed farther. Be much in thankfulness for general grace, while you have not an assurance of special interest. Animate yourselves by that to go on in duty, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; and your way will hardly fail to brighten as you go on.

S E R M O N XIX.

Christian Fortitude.

2 P E T. i. 5. former part.

And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue.

C H R I S T I A N I T Y encourages us to lay aside a *slavish fear of the great God*; and much more obliges us to get above a *cowardly fear of men*. Nor is any thing more necessary to our acquitting ourselves well in our course of obedience to our heavenly Father, than courage and undaunted resolution: which I apprehend the apostle here to recommend.

He supposes those to whom he wrote, to have obtained like *precious faith with him* and the other apostles, ver. 1. *i. e.* to believe the Gospel, as well as they. After this character given them in the inscription, we have the usual apostolical salutation; a prayer, that *grace and peace might be multiplied to them*. On this occasion he enlarges on the happy
state

state they were brought into by the Gospel, the great and good things given them and promised to them in Christ, for this purpose, that they might be wrought up to a divine temper and life. Hereupon he immediately proceeds to exhort them to give all diligence in building a proper superstructure upon their belief of the Gospel. That which he recommends, consists of *seven* important articles. The first mentioned, and which he immediately connects with faith, is virtue. *Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue.*

Some would understand *virtue* in a general sense, for an universal regularity of mind and manners, or a disposition to all virtuous actions. So *Peter's* exhortation would fall in with that of another apostle, *Tit. iii. 8. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.* But this general sense seems not so natural here, because all the following particulars reckoned here, except *knowledge*, are comprehended in *virtue* taken in this large sense: *temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity.* The answer which some give to this reason, seems not satisfactory; that the apostle first recommends virtue in general, and then some principal parts and branches of it: for by the manner of expression it is imported, that every one of them signifies a distinct excellence, something

thing *additional* to what had gone before, *Add* one to the other.

Therefore I take the word *virtue* in a more limited sense here, to mean the particular disposition of *christian fortitude*. So the word ἀρετή is often taken in *Greek* writets, and *virtus* by the *Latins*. This sense seems to agree best with the context. What could more naturally be pressed upon us after *faith*, or a belief of the Gospel, than courage in the profession of it, and in a practice correspondent to it? And what could more aptly follow upon this, than that we should *add* to our *virtue* or courage, *knowledge*? or a growing acquaintance with the doctrines and duties contained in the rule of our faith, that our courage and resolution may not be ill placed?

The truth then, which I am now to insist upon, is this,

That christian courage and fortitude is a temper of mind, very necessary to be found in all true believers.

Here it will be my endeavour to shew, I. The nature of this christian grace. And, II. What may be intended in the exhortation to add it to our faith.

I. I am to explain the nature of this grace of christian courage or fortitude.

Courage in general is a temper which disposes a man to do brave and commendable actions, without being daunted at the appearance

ance of dangers and difficulties in the way. The heathen moralists reckoned bravery in war to be the highest expression of courage, and that a soldier had the greatest opportunity to shew courage; because life, the dearest thing in this world, is risked in war. Thus the christian life being a warfare, gives the principal occasion and opportunity to shew *christian* courage. It is nothing else but to behave as *good soldiers of Jesus Christ*, 2 Tim. ii. 3. to adhere to Christ, and to continue in the discharge of christian duty, in the view of the greatest discouragements and hazards.

To explain it more particularly, it may be proper to shew, 1. *For what* christian courage is to be exercised. 2. *Against what* it is to be exerted. And, 3. In what acts and instances it should be expressed.

1. *For what* it is to be exercised.

For the cause makes it a christian grace. It is courage in Christ's cause; that is, in maintaining the profession of the christian faith, and adhering to the practice of our duty, as far as we are convinced of the mind of God; so as not to deny a known truth, or admit the least sin, upon any consideration whatsoever. This is *warring a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience*, to which Timothy is exhorted, 1 Tim. i. 18, 19. These are the *two* things which christian fortitude is concerned to hold fast, and not to suffer either to be wrested away.

But it must necessarily be presupposed, that we are careful to inform ourselves well about the mind and will of God, relating both to faith and practice; that our courage may not be blind and rash, without a good foundation to support it. Otherwise for ought we know, we may be *contending earnestly for error*, instead of *the faith once delivered to the saints*; or for the mere precepts of men, or our own humours, instead of the commands of God. This will not be esteemed by God christian courage, but mad rashness, if we have not made a careful inquiry into the doctrines and duties of our religion. Though we should chance to be in the right, yet if we have not arrived at a conviction of this upon conscientious and impartial examination according to our capacities and opportunities, the most resolute adherence will not be a christian virtue; because in the course we have taken, we might have chanced as well to be in the wrong.

And indeed, without such diligent inquiries, we are hardly like to be courageous in an hour of trial. Whatever resolution we may seem to have, while difficulties are at a distance; yet the actual approach of sufferings and strong temptations will search our foundations: and we shall scarce *withstand* resolutely *in an evil day, and having done all, stand*, unless we have good evidence, that we are contented for divine truth, or *striving against sin*.

It is therefore of the utmost concern to us, as ever we would have our courage *acceptable* or *abiding*, that we have solid grounds for the persuasions we admit in religion, or the word of God indeed on our side. Then our resolution will be truly christian, and it is like to be proof against the greatest difficulties.

2. *Against what* christian courage is to be exercised.

It supposes oppositions, trials and dangers in our way; else there would be no occasion for it. It is a temper for which there will be no room in heaven; and the need of it now, ariseth from our present condition as in a state of conflict. Some indeed meet with greater trials of their courage than others do; but all have some, and none can certainly promise themselves an exemption even from the greatest. Now all that hath a tendency to awaken a Christian's fear of danger in his course of faith and obedience, gives opportunity to exercise his courage: whether it be apt to excite fear of present sufferings for his fidelity, or of his final success. And so we may observe,

(1.) The power, the subtilty and activity of the powers of darkness call for courage in a Christian. Upon this the apostle founds an exhortation to *be strong* or courageous, *Eph.* vi. 10, 12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, weak or visible enemies only; but against principalities, against powers, against*

the rulers of the darknes of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Number, policy, strength, unwearied application in enemies, are each of them trials of the courage of a soldier; and especially when they are all united. A little soul is affrighted and disheartned at them. If they have had success in former assaults, the discouragement is still greater. But all these things whet the courage of the brave.

These things all meet in the case of a Christian. He is entred upon a warfare with evil spirits; who are invisible, and therefore the more apt to gain advantage at unawares: who are many in number, and therefore able to find him full employment: of the most refined skill and subtilty, furnished with great capacities of nature, and grown old in experience; and therefore very likely to beguile: of the most implacable and desperate malice, who vow our ruin, if they can accomplish it: restless and incessant in their pernicious endeavours; *going about continually, seeking whom they may devour,* 1 Pet. v. 8. And every one of us is conscions, that they have had too frequent success against us already, as they have actually slain their thousands. Such enemies will find work for our courage, to *resist them*, notwithstanding all these threatening circumstances of danger, *ver. 9.*

(2.) The oppositions from within ourselves require courage. Our own irregular inclinations,

nations, and affections, and passions are difficult to be overcome: in some temptations they are particularly violent, they have sometimes been successful against our best resolutions; and after a long warfare, most feel them to retain a considerable power, and gain not such a conquest as they desire. All these things are very apt to dishearten. And if we add, that all our struggles with these domestick enemies, and all the ground we gain from them, is offering a sort of violence to ourselves, like *the cutting off of a right hand*, or *the plucking out of a right eye*; the trial occasioned thereby to our fortitude and courage, will appear very considerable.

(3.) The several discouragements or dangers we may meet with from other men, in the way of our duty, and even for our duty, make courage necessary. *Solomon* tells us, that *the fear of man bringeth a snare*, Prov. xxix. 25. Courage is to overcome this snare.

All Christians have warning even to prepare for martyrdom; to be ready to *resist unto blood, striving against sin*; to *take up the cross*, though they should be called to bear it in the literal sense. This they must be determined to do, rather than deny any thing which they believe to be a truth, or comply with any known sin. God sometimes leaves even the lives of his servants at the mercy of their most cruel enemies; and then they may have no choice left, but either to forsake Christ

or their lives. And notwithstanding our long ease and enjoyment of the liberty of our consciences; notwithstanding the gracious indulgence and protection of the present government; yet in the uncertainty of human affairs, none of us can be sure, that we shall escape even the fiery trial. We could expect no better, should God ever suffer the bigotry of *Rome* to possess the throne of these kingdoms; which may he of his infinite mercy always prevent: for we know, that when that sort of people *kill us* for our supposed heresy, *they think that they do God good service*. Now here is christian courage, if we should be called to lose our lives for the testimony of Jesus, *not to be moved with these things, nor to count our lives dear unto our selves, so that we may finish our course with joy*, Acts xx. 24.

This is the utmost that man can do, to kill the body: but beside that, there are many lower sufferings for righteousness sake, which require fortitude to bear them; the loss of substance, or liberty, or friends, or reputation. We may lie open to *the trial of cruel mockings* and reproaches, when enemies are restrained from doing more; and these are some trials of resolution to an ingenuous mind.

Or even to descend lower; it is a point of courage, especially to some tempers, to be singular or to act contrary to the common stream of practice; to be obliged by our sentiments

to go against the advice and importunity of friends; to differ in points of conduct from many wise and good men, whom we highly esteem and value. And yet a good man may sometimes find himself necessitated to run counter to his dearest associates, and even to *withstand them to the face*, Gal. ii. 11. while he studies to approve himself to God.

It yet remains, for explaining christian courage, that it be shewn,

3. *Wherein*, or in what acts and instances it should express itself.

Insensibleness of difficulties or dangers is not a proper expression of it. It is not expected of a Christian, that his apprehension of these things should be less quick than other people's, or that he should have no natural reluctancy to them. Without that, they would be no trial of his courage.

Nor are we to expose ourselves *unnecessarily* to dangers. We should exercise courage in conjunction with christian prudence, tho' it ought not to be under the restraints of carnal policy. It is christian prudence not to run upon danger, farther than plain duty obliges us. I cannot say, that it is always mens duty to profess every particular opinion they entertain to all the world: in some cases that rule holds, *Hast thou faith? have it to thy self before God*, Rom. xiv. 22. The preservation of the peace of the church, and their own safety, may justify them in it. But it is

always our duty not to deny or profess the contrary to that which we believe, tho' at the greatest peril. It would rather be imprudence than duty, to act in time of prosecution, as some primitive Christians did, who ran uncalled to the heathen tribunals, and cried, *I am a Christian*, on purpose that they might obtain the honour and reward of martyrdom. It is sufficient, if we are ready to hold fast our profession, when the providence of God calls us out to the conflict; if we are willing to bear any temporal evil for our faithfulness, rather than be false to Christ and a good conscience, when we must chuse the one or the other. It is delivered as an ordinary rule by Christ himself to his disciples, when he foretels the persecutions that would await them, *Mat. x. 23. When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.* Tho' circumstances may sometimes vary the case, and make even this inconsistent with duty. *Nehemiah* was so situated: when the whole work of repairing the state of the *Jews*, after the captivity, depended under God upon his presence with the people; tho' he was apprized of attempts against him by the common enemy, yet in such circumstances says he, *Should such a man as I flee?* *Nehem. vi. 11.* And the like may occur in the case of others: which good men must judge of for themselves, as they fall out, and by which those who are thoroughly devoted to God will govern themselves. The ordinary rule is as hath been mentioned. But

But christian courage is to exert itself in such ways as these.

(1.) In deliberate and vigorous resolutions for God and our duty, upon counting the cost. This is all that can be done, when difficulties and dangers are not actually present; seriously to consider them, and upon balancing matters, to determine for a firm adherence to our master, whatever it may cost us. It is true, we may deceive ourselves in this courage at a distance, and after resolutions that seemed bold and brave, betray shameful cowardise in the conflict. The disciples were a sad instance of this: Their resolution for Christ seemed firm, and certainly they thought it so themselves. *Peter said to him, Tho' all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,* Matt. xxvi. 33. In ver. 35. he seemed to consider the very worst that could befall him, and from that particular view to add new vigour to his resolution. *Tho' I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.* And yet we know, *Peter soon shamefully denied him, and all the rest forsook him and fled.* Such an instance may justly be a loud admonition against confidence in ourselves, for performing good resolutions in our own strength; and against trusting to them when we have made them, without continued watchfulness and recollection: one or both of which seem to have been the faults of the disciples, and the
reason

reason of their ill success. But their miscarriage after laudable resolves, should by no means divert us from forming such purposes. Christ himself recommends them to all his followers. When he had stated the terms of being his disciples, he plainly intimates the folly and danger of setting out in profession, without weighing those terms, and a full determination to go thro', *Luke* xiv. 26—30. The same thing *Barnabas* inculcated upon the church of *Antioch*; he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord, *Acts* xi. 23. Such a noble ardour in *Paul* was a bright part of his character, when he could say, *I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*, *Acts* xxi. 13.

(2.) In the suppression of distracting fear of evils at a distance. The coward often fears, where no fear is; and, as well as the slothful man, creates to himself many imaginary dangers: *There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets*, *Prov.* xxii. 13. and represents real ones with a much more formidable aspect than they have in themselves. His spirits sink at the prospect. Fortitude has a very contrary effect. The brave soldier of Christ does not anxiously take thought about the morrow, but leaves future events to God's ordering. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid*, *Psal.* cxii. 7, 8.

(3.) In

(3.) In a vigorous application to our christian work, notwithstanding the stated and constant difficulties and oppositions attending it. Tho' Satan would hinder, and the world ensnare, and a corrupt heart resist, a courageous Christian goes on as one resolved to conquer or die; *striving to enter in at the strait gate*, Luke xiii. 24. Maintaining an unwearied conflict with his spiritual enemies, wherever they oppose him in his great design. If he is sometimes foiled, yet he returns to his warfare, and strenuously endeavours to regain the ground he has lost. And if still he hath not the success he wishes for, yet he resolves to preserve and never to quit the field, till his warfare is accomplished. Such a man answers the character given by our Saviour of the heirs of heaven, *Matt. xi. 12. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

(4.) In a readiness to undertake hard and difficult services, when God calls to them. Such as may be eminently for the honour of God or the advantage of our generation, though we may foresee few to help us, and many to oppose us; though we must reckon upon numerous and formidable adversaries, and reproaches possibly from good and bad men too; though the business we are employed in may be unacceptable to the most. Holy fortitude is necessary to dispose men *to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty;*
when

when popular mistakes are to be opposed ; when iniquity comes in like a flood, and God seems to call out, *Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers ? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity ?* Psal. xciv.

16. Or when duty obliges us to go upon an ungrateful errand ; as when God was about to pronounce the forest judgments upon the *Jews*, and said in the hearing of the prophet *Isaiab*, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, here am I, send me,* Isa. vi. 8.

And especially, when visible dangers await us, not to decline a service of which we are capable, is an act of illustrious courage for God : as *Moses* bravely pursued the design of delivering *Israel* out of *Egypt*, till he had accomplished it, *not fearing the wrath of the king,* Heb. xi. 27.

(5.) In an uniform steadiness of conduct under all the trials we actually meet with. It is no great expression of courage in common life, to talk big when dangers are remote ; those are most apt to do so, who behave worst in time of trial : but cool courage and steadiness, as men are called out to action, is the most valuable thing. So it is in a Christian. If he quits not his post, forsakes not his God, makes not shipwreck of faith or of a good conscience, when he is called to suffer for his fidelity ; this is indeed the christian hero. Tho' he should have had more fears beforehand how he might behave, than some more confident

dent men; tho' he should meet suffering with a trembling heart; yet if he stands his ground in the hour of temptation, he has the truest courage. As it hath been observed of some of the bravest soldiers, they have come with a trembling hand into the battle, but when once engaged, have done wonders. This should be the great care of every one of us in an hour of trial, that we betray no known truth, and admit no known sin, whatever temporal good we lose, and whatever evil we suffer thereby: and to continue thus steadfast from one trial to another; that fortitude may be our habitual temper, and not merely occasional. And if we can maintain serenity and chearfulness under trials, if we can *rejoice in tribulation*; so much the more will christian courage have its perfect work.

II. I am farther to shew what may be intended in the exhortation to *add virtue*, or courage, *to our faith*.

This may intimate the imperfection of our faith without this superstructure upon it. It is necessary to be added to our faith, in order to our acceptance with God. We must *confess with the mouth*, as well as *believe in our hearts the Lord Jesus*, if we would *be saved*, Rom. x. 9. Faith is dead, if it produce not a correspondent profession and course of action. Without this, we may ourselves justly question the sincerity of it, and cannot recommend it

it effectually to others ; for without fortitude we cannot perform and execute the noble dictates of so divine a principle.

But that which I principally apprehend to be designed, is, to intimate the just reason which our faith gives for christian courage. When we are called to make this addition, we are only required to *build* the most proper and natural structure *upon our most holy faith*. The fortitude required by the Gospel, is distinguished from all other fortitude, not only as it is upon account of the truths and duties of christianity, but as it is founded upon christian principles. Christian faith is most fit to inspire with christian fortitude. For instance,

1. Faith discovers divine providence asin-gaged for us and with us in all our difficulties. God frequently animated his servants under the Old Testament in hard services, by an assurance of his presence. *Fear not, for I am with thee*, Gen. xxvi. 24. Isa. xli. 10. The three *Jewish* youths considered him as *able to deliver them*, when *Nebuchadnezzar* ordered them to be cast into the fiery furnace, *Dan. iii. 17.* and therefore, like the *Jewish* nurses in *Egypt*, they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Faith will support us in the greatest dangers by this reasoning, *If God be for us, who can be against us?* Rom. viii. 31. *He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee : so that we may boldly say in the way of our duty, the Lord is my helper, and*
I will

I will not fear what man shall do unto me, Heb. xiii. 5, 6. nor yet what devils can do; for greater is he that is in us, and with us, than he that is in the world, 1 John iv. 4.

2. Faith proposes the divine Spirit, as directly provided to help our infirmities. Particularly for this very purpose, to inspire us with needful courage. So the apostle prays for the *Ephesians, that God would grant them to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, Eph. iii. 16. i. e. animated with proper courage in their christian course. Agreeable to that antient promise, Psal. xxvii. 14. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; i. e. Maintain your trust in God, and so set yourselves vigorously to go on in the way of your duty, and you shall find his confirming grace still more to corroborate and animate you.*

3. Faith represents our main enemies as already vanquished, and as having their chief power broken. The captain of our salvation hath personally overcome them, and as the head of his church too: *Having spoiled principalities and powers, which he did by the efficacy of his death, he made a shew of them openly; triumphing over them in it, or rather, in himself, by his resurrection and ascension leading captivity captive, Col. ii. 15.* This is a strong encouragement, not only after his example, but under his banner, to fight the good fight against them. And to the same encouragement

agement he directs us himself with reference to the world and the evils of it; *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*, John xvi. 33. Hence the intention of God in sending his Son is represented to be, *that we should be saved from our enemies*, Luke i. 71. And then, ver. 74, 75. *That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.*

4. Faith gives us particular assurance, that our trials shall not exceed our strength; either the strength we have, or that which shall be imparted, 1 Cor. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

5. Faith sets in view greater evils to be feared from our cowardice, than can be feared from our adherence to God. Christ elegantly sets these the one over against the other, Luke xii. 4, 5. *I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do.* They cannot go so far without divine permission, but it is certain that is doing their worst. *But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, who can do that and more too; who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.* And this we are fairly warned will be their lot, who cowardly turn
their

their backs, after they have seemed to engage in the Christian warfare. If we should draw back, it must be unto perdition; God's soul will have no pleasure in us, Heb. x. 38, 39. And the fearful, who chose always to be in the rear in danger, stand in the front of those who shall have their part in the second death, Rev. xxi. 8. One would think this necessity, and the impossibility of escaping without it, should make even a coward to fight. On the other hand,

6. Faith assures us of the certain and glorious success of our courage. That our endeavours against our powerful enemies shall issue in a full conquest: *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*, Rom. xvi. 20. And though now a faint, after all his struggles, may have frequent occasion to mourn over *the body of death*, he may be assured that God will deliver him from it thro' *Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vii. 24, 25. And death itself, *the last enemy shall be destroyed*, 1 Cor. xv. 26. And unspeakable rewards shall be the prize of the conquerors. We find promises of glorious recompences, in a variety of moving descriptions, made to the seven churches of *Asia*, in the second and third chapters of the *Revelations*; but all of them assured only *to him that overcometh*. We strive for mastery, not as uncertain what we are to obtain by it, but for an incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. ix. 25, 26. If we are

stedfast and unmoveable, we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, chap. xv. 58. And the promised rewards are plainly declared to bear a proportion to all the difficulties and dangers we surmount.

7. Faith represents to us the noblest examples of such holy fortitude upon the same principle. All the excellent of the earth particularly that noble collection of worthies, whose brave exploits are recorded in *Heb. xi.* the glorious apostle *Paul* himself; and above all, the captain of our salvation, who was an illustrious pattern of invincible courage in his work: He feared the face of no man in the course of his ministry; but boldly reprov'd sin and sinners. His enemies could not help owning it, *Matt. xxii. 16.* *Thou carest not for any man, for thou regardest not the person of men.* He pursued his Father's business, and the instruction of mankind, notwithstanding the unwearied designs of ill men against him; which led some upon his preaching openly at *Jerusalem* at the feast of tabernacles, to say with admiration, *Is not this he whom they seek to kill? but lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him,* *John vii. 25, 26.* When some of the *Pharisees* would have persuaded him to quit the place, where he knew his present duty lay, for fear of *Herod*, *Luke xiii. 31, 32.* *Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee;* Jesus said unto them, *Go ye, and tell that*
fox,

fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. He neither quitted his post of service for fear of him; nor declined to send him a sharp reproof, according to his special prophetic commission, for fear of provoking him farther. But especially he shewed the truest fortitude, when he was called to bear his last testimony to the truth, and *witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, sealing it with his blood.* In this the apostle calls us to *look to Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God.* For consider him that endureth such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds, Heb. xii. 2, 3. We are called to consider this pattern of courage, and of the glorious success of it too, to animate us to new vigour in our race.

Upon the whole,

1. Consider this grace of *fortitude*, as a matter of the utmost importance in the christian life. The variety of oppositions and difficulties in our way make it necessary. We shall never make any considerable progress in the divine life without it, nor ever do much for God or our generation.

It is indeed more especially necessary in *some stations*: As in *magistrates*. Great things depend upon their vigour, when they like

Aſa, take courage and put away the abominations in a land, 2 Chron. xv. 8. And in miniſters, who have peculiar occaſion with all boldneſs to ſpeak the word, Acts iv. 29. to ſpeak the Goſpel boldly, as they ought to ſpeak, Eph. vi. 20. But it is neceſſary in every ſta- tion: to reſiſt the devil, whom we have all in common for an enemy, 1 Pet. v. 9. and to overcome the world, to which every man is obliged, and which no man can ſucceſsfully do, without a vigour of reſolution.

It is eminently neceſſary *in ſome duties*. As for inſtance, in reprov- ing and endeavouring to reform ſinners. But almoſt every duty will at one time or other require it.

It is comparatively more neceſſary *in ſome periods of time and circumſtances of life*, than in others. As, in times of perſecution, or of the uncommon prevalence of ſin and profaneneſs. But the beſt times on earth will furniſh us with ſome occaſions for it.

It was a proper diſpoſition for a ſaint *in every diſpenſation of the church*. It was often inculcated under the Old Teſtament: *Fear not; be ſtrong and of good courage*. But it is eminently ſuitable to a ſaint in the evangelical ſtate, wherein we have much ſtronger motives to it. For as the apoſtle ſays, *2 Tim. i. 7. God hath not given us the ſpirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind*. He has given us no occaſion for a cowardly temper, but the greateſt reaſon for a courageous ſpirit.

2. Cultivate therefore your faith, in order to the forming of your minds to holy fortitude. Frequently contemplate the establishing motives of the Gospel, which are so full and apposite; and by prayer and frequent reviews of the grounds of your faith, endeavour to confirm your hope in the Gospel.

3. Use all farther additional means to fortify your minds. Be prepared for the worst, by counting frequently the cost. Make clear the goodness of your cause, for which you may be called to exert your courage. Make sure of the goodness of your state, and carefully exercise a good conscience: without this, the best cause in profession will be very faintly maintained in an evil day; because the Gospel so fully assures us, that an assertion of the clearest and most important truth contained in it, will not be a sufficient passport for heaven, without real goodness and a general sincerity of heart.

The End of the first Volume.

1771

T H E
C O N T E N T S

Of the F I R S T V O L U M E.

S E R M O N I. Page 1

TH E importance of knowing what Spirit we are of.

LUKE ix. 55. *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

General characters of the Christian Temper.

S E R M. II. p. 25

A new Spirit

E P H. iv. 23. *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*

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A divine Nature.

2 P E T. i. 4.—*That by these ye might be partakers of the divine Nature.—*

S E R M.

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The same mind which was in Christ.

PHIL. ii. 5. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*

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A carnal and a spiritual Mind.

ROM. viii. 6. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

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Faith the main principle of the Christian Temper.

2 COR. v. 7. *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

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Faith in Christ.

I P E T. i. 8. *Whom having not seen, ye love: In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,*

C O N T E N T S.

*believing, ye rejoyce with joy unspeakable
and full of glory.*

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Love to Christ.

— *Whom having not seen, ye love, &c.*

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Rejoicing in Christ.

— *In whom, though now ye see him not, yet
believing, ye rejoyce, &c.*

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In relation to the Holy Spirit.

E P H. v. 18.— *Be filled with the Spirit.*

S E R M. XVII, XVIII. p. 350

The Spirit of Bondage, and the Spirit of
Adoption.

R O M. viii. 15. *For ye have not received the
spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye
have received the spirit of adoption, where-
by we cry, Abba, Father.*

S E R M. XIX. p. 398

Christian Fortitude.

2 P E T. i. 5. *And besides this, giving all di-
ligence, add to your faith, virtue.—*

F I N I S.



